The Return of Romantic Irony: Modes of Feminist and Post-Colonial Identity in the Work of Angela Carter, Salman Rushdie and Ben Okri

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Abstract

The title of my thesis is *The Return of Romantic Irony: Modes of Feminist and Post-Colonial Identity in the work of Angela Carter, Salman Rushdie and Ben Okri*. Within my thesis, I explore how the work of Angela Carter, Salman Rushdie and Ben Okri can be viewed in connection with traditional ideas of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Romantic Irony, and how their work may embody a more contemporary Romantic Irony. This contemporary Romantic Irony involves an ironic usage of ideas and texts associated with romance and Romanticism, in order to both address patriarchal and orientalist constructions of the 'Other', and to explore feminist and post-colonial constructions of individual and cultural identities.

In Chapter One, I discuss definitions of Romantic Irony, and the various ways in which Romantic Irony might be viewed in conjunction with the work of these three authors. In order to approach a working definition of 'the romantic', I briefly frame the relationships between romance, Romanticism and Romantic Irony, and establish a particular set of ideas and themes which I view as central to this concept. In this chapter I also develop a theoretical framework for the rest of the thesis, examining points of convergence and divergence between 'the romantic', feminism, post-colonialism, and postmodernism.

In Chapter Two, I examine how Carter ironises the dynamic of the Romantic sublime in her work, and how her work develops from an exploration of abjection in her first novel, to an exploration of the sublime in proceeding novels. I view her work in conjunction with Bakhtin's ideas of the grotesque and Kristeva's ideas of the abject. This chapter also explores the role Romantic love plays in shaping the subjectivity of Carter's fictional characters, and connects this with the sublime, transgressive nature of love as Carter describes it in her fiction and journalism.

In Chapter Three, I examine how Rushdie ironises and refigures various ideas within romance and Romanticism, such as Romantic imagination, romantic love, the Romantic artist as a hero and/or prophet, and the Romantic sublime (with regard to the dynamic between artist and M(other) Nature. I discuss how these revisionings of Romantic ideas relate to issues of post-colonial identity such as the fate of nationalism and the construction of hybrid/migrant identities. I also question if Rushdie's reinvention of Romantic ideas doesn't to a certain extent reproduce the difficulties with representations of gender found within, especially, the dynamic of the Romantic sublime.

In Chapter Four, I discuss how Okri's work poses an unavoidable question within the framework of the thesis, as to how valid Western definitions of 'the romantic' and the fantastical are when applied to non-Western literature. With this in mind, I describe Okri's shift from ideas of imaginative transcendence to imaginative transformation. I also investigate his stress on the importance of individual, romantic love as a counterpoint to mass political corruption, and his emphasis on the artist as a redemptive hero who fuses elements of spiritual and political awareness.

In my conclusion, I discuss the relationship between feminist theories of love and intersubjectivity, and post-colonial theories of hybridity and migrancy.

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Declaration

I declare that, except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is entirely my own work and that no part of it has been submitted for any other degree or qualification.

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List of Abbreviations:

Shadow Dance *SD*
The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman *IDMDH*
The Sadeian Woman *SW*
The Passion of New Eve *PNE*
Nothing Sacred *NS*
Nights at the Circus *NC*
Wise Children *WC*

The Famished Road *FR*
Songs of Enchantment *SE*
Astonishing the Gods *AG*
Dangerous Love *DL*

Midnight's Children *MC*
The Satanic Verses *TSV*
Haroun and the Sea of Stories *HSS*
Imaginary Homelands *IH*
The Moor's Last Sigh *TMLS*

Introduction

The title of this thesis is *The Return of Romantic Irony: Modes of Identity in Feminist and Post-Colonial Literature*. It is called so not only in an effort to evoke the idea of Romantic Irony of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (although it has certain aspects in common with it), but to examine how three contemporary British authors have ironised various aspects of what I have termed 'the romantic'. Within this thesis, in Chapter One, I will define 'the romantic' particularly and primarily as it relates to the genre of romance and to aspects of German Romantic Irony and British Romanticism. The thesis explores how Angela Carter, Salman Rushdie and Ben Okri draw from and ironise such texts and ideas in their work, in order to explore feminist and post-colonial formulations of individual and cultural identity. I argue that while these authors often ironise such concepts as the Romantic sublime, Romantic imagination and romantic love (*Eros*) in order to address patriarchal and orientalist constructions of 'the Other', they also reenvisage the role these concepts play in contemporary modes of self-creation. (I place the phrase 'the Other' in quotation-marks to emphasise that the Other is only Other as such from the point of view of the identity-constructing self, and with that understanding, will hereafter refrain from placing it in quotation marks.) In the literature we will examine, constructions of the Other have particular ramifications for women, and for those individuals affected by British imperialism and colonisation.

Although the literature in question ironises these various constructions, it also reveals within it a commitment to certain ideals central to romance and Romanticism. To that end, I will discuss how Carter, Rushdie and Okri, in their rewriting of ideas and texts of romance and Romanticism, still choose to commit themselves to certain principles of 'the romantic', most notably *Eros* and the Romantic imagination. (These terms will be discussed further in Chapter One.) In this sense, their

rewriting is a revisioning, one that applies the revolutionary potential of these concepts in a more contemporary context. We will see, however, that in rewriting 'the romantic' in an ironic mode, the concepts of *Eros* and imagination are not merely accepted at face value, but scrutinised for their possible complicity with oppressive representations of the Other.

In the context of this thesis, Romantic Irony becomes a political strategy for revising and revisioning 'the romantic' for feminist and post-colonial writers. I will explore how Carter, Rushdie and Okri, in the words of Northrop Frye, attempt to 'kidnap' romance again,[1] this time from the hegemonic powers which appropriated it for narratives of objectification and colonisation. We might then regard this process of '"revisioning"' as a 'rereading of "canonical" texts in the light of post-colonial discursive practices' (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 1989: 194) as well as feminist discursive practices.[2]

I must at this point express my own critical unease with the project at hand, though I would like to view it as a useful mode of self-reflexive unease, which arises from what may, in some respects, seem a proprietary move by myself as a 'Western' critic. In this thesis I regard Salman Rushdie and Ben Okri as 'British' post-colonial writers, and admittedly, in certain contexts and circumstances, this classification might be seen as a somewhat collusive pact with Western cultural imperialism. My reasons for regarding them as British post-colonial writers, rather than Indian and Nigerian/African writers respectively, have to do in part with a desire to see these writers themselves as hybrids, with all the critical advantages and disadvantages that status has accrued.

As British post-colonial writers, Rushdie and Okri may speak, as it were, from the belly of the beast; they are representatives of other cultures, inextricably linked to the history and contemporary context of British culture and (neo-)imperialism. The fact remains, however, that they themselves

are products just as much of British culture as they are of Indian or Nigerian culture, having spent a large percentage of childhood and adulthood in Britain. It must not be overlooked that both have embraced either British citizenship, and/or long-term residency in Britain, although their subject matter is largely focused upon the cultures of India, Pakistan, Nigeria and Africa in general.[3] Additionally, as the authors of *The Empire Writes Back* have noted in a section entitled 'Post-colonial literature and English Studies', empire valorised British literature and integrated it into colonial curriculums; British post-colonial writers must therefore negotiate this colonial influence not only upon their writing, but also that of their literary predecessors who took on the values of 'English Studies'.[4] (One might, for instance, regard Saladin Chamcha of *The Satanic Verses* as a modern-day advocate of English Studies, who learns a lesson from his false valorisation of British culture.) Just as problematically, certain Western critics continue to valorise specifically Western canonical categories when describing 'post-colonial' literature; for example, Jonathan White seems determined to classify *Midnight's Children* as a Modernist novel, rather than identifying Modernism as just one influence among many in the novel.[5] The problem is pervasive with regard to criticism of Okri's work as well, leading Patrick Chabal, for instance, to assert that 'Ben Okri's recent novels may be seen as instances of the postmodern in a new literature of Africa' (Chabal, 1996: 41).[6]

The matter of influence is a convoluted one; in addition to the literary canonical issues involved, there is of course the issue of the English language itself, although we will not be primarily concerned with this issue in the current study. English may be the language of the coloniser, but precisely because of this, it is also, ironically, the language that is most likely to reach the greatest majority of Indians and Nigerians. As Richard Cronin notes, to write about India in any other language than English, even though this is ironically the language of the elite in India, is to divide it;

it may be precisely Rushdie's position as an outsider educated mainly in England and writing in the English language that allows him to comment on the whole of India.[7] James Harrison also notes that Chinua Achebe, for example, has claimed to use English in his novels not to reach the world outside of Nigeria, but rather to reach the whole of Nigeria itself.[8] With regard to Rushdie's accessibility, however, there are two general camps represented by views such as Harveen Sachdeva Mann's that, on the one hand, 'it is...the Western(ized), liberal cosmopolite who is Rushdie's primary implied as well as actual audience', (Mann, 1995: 290)[9] and on the other, by views such as Anuradha Dingwaney Needham's, that for Rushdie's work there is, instead, 'the absence of a homogeneous audience' (Needham, 1988/89: 614).[10] This implied heterogeneous audience may or may not use English as its first language, and certainly includes more than just the liberal cosmopolite, particularly in light of the fact that much of the actual audience for *The Satanic Verses*, for example, proved to be so decidedly reactionary.

There are potential drawbacks to a critical position that chooses to categorise Rushdie and Okri as 'British post-colonial writers'; such a choice risks obscuring their more immediate connections to non-Western cultures and sources. It may also be that such writers require a category of their own known simply as 'post-colonial', but there are arguably disadvantages to severing ties of identity with specific colonial powers; i.e. French post-colonial literature may differ significantly from British post-colonial literature, and European post-colonial literature may differ radically from Native American or Hispanic post-colonial literature. Likewise, it must be emphasised, Nigerian post-colonial literature may differ radically from Indian post-colonial literature due, at the very least, to different 'indigenous' traditions, though both deal with the aftermath of British imperialism and colonisation. The fact remains, however, that part of the cultural imperialism perpetrated by Britain

involved the colonisation of school and university curriculums; British literature in general and in particular became a shaping force within the literature of former colonies. British post-colonial writing in this sense contains both an engagement with the influence of, and an antagonistic encounter with, the literature of a common colonial power.

For the reasons mentioned above, I choose to emphasise the associations between these writers and their texts, and Britain and its cultural past. Moreover, I choose to emphasise their connection with a Western literary past; within the current study, this entails the ironic usage by Rushdie and Okri of ideas and texts from romance, Romanticism and Romantic Irony. However, as Edward Said highlights in *Orientalism*,[11] and as we will discuss further in Chapter One, British and European Romantic texts themselves often drew from 'non-Western' sources; post-colonial writers working with and against these Romantic texts are also often involved in what can be viewed as a reappropriation of their own cultural (re)sources. Having given the above justification for my ostensible 'pact with the devil', I shall proceed in Chapter One to define the various terms involved in the present study, as well as their relationship to one another, so that we may begin to define what I have termed 'the romantic' (hereafter referred to without quotation marks). Chapter One also outlines the relationships between feminist, post-colonial and postmodernist critical perspectives, in order to examine their significance to the romantic in the current study.

1. Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scripture*: *A Study of the Structure of Romance* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 29-30.

2. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back* (London and New York: Routledge: 1989).

3. Rushdie is a British citizen, and Okri 'was born in Minna, Nigeria, and spent part of his childhood in London. He wrote his first novel, *Flowers and Shadows*, at the age of 17, returning to England two years later to study comparative literature at the University of Essex'. Dan Glaister, Matt Seaton and Alex Duval Smith, 'Famished Road Feeds French Book Fever', *The Guardian*, 26 November 1996, p. 3.

4. T*he Empire Writes Back*, pp. 2-4.

5. Jonathan White, 'Politics and the Individual in the Modernist Historical Novel', in *Recasting the World: Writing After Colonialism*, ed. by Jonathan White (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp. 208-40.

6. Patrick Chabal, 'The African Crisis', in *Postcolonial Identities in Africa*, ed. by Terence O. Ranger and Richard Werbner (London and New Jersey: Zed, 1996).

7. Richard Cronin, *Imagining India* (London: Macmillan Press, 1989), pp. 4-6.

8. James Harrison, *Salman Rushdie* (New York: Twayne, 1992), p. 3.

9. Harveen Sachdeva Mann, '"Being Borne Across": Translation and Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*', *Criticism*, v37(2), (Spring 1995), 281-308.

10. Anuradha Dingwaney Needham, 'The Politics of Post-Colonial Identity in Salman Rushdie', *The Massachusetts Review*, v29(4), (Winter 1988-89), 609-24.

11. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978).

Chapter One: Towards a Contingent Definition and a Theoretical Contextualisation of 'the Romantic' and 'Romantic Irony'

Romantic Irony

To understand how and where it intersects with elements of romance and Romanticism, it may be useful to describe the history and character of the 'original' Romantic Irony, that German aesthetic philosophy developed primarily by Friedrich von Schlegel and his brother, August Wilhelm von Schlegel in the late eighteenth century (though it has also been associated, to a lesser degree, with J.F. von Shiller and F.W.J. Schelling), and said to be exemplified by the work of Tiecke, Novalis, and E.T.A. Hoffmann. Examining the character of German Romantic Irony will also aid us in understanding the interrelations between Romantic Irony, romance and British Romanticism. Our discussion centers primarily around the philosophy of Romantic Irony and its artistic expression, and where comparisons to works of the contemporary authors in question arise, they will be noted.

As René Wellek has observed, as with many other 'movements' within literary history, Romantic Irony as such was constituted only after the fact.[1] It came to refer mostly to a particular literary technique; in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*,[2] Chris Baldick defines 'romantic irony' as

> a kind of literary self-consciousness in which an author signals his or her freedom from the limits of a given work by puncturing its fictional illusion and exposing its process of composition as a matter of authorial whim. (Baldick, 1991: 192-3)

Thus in Romantic Irony, the author destroys the fictional illusion, usually by appearing in the form of a narrator and providing the reader with a meta-narrative, which has the effect of highlighting the process whereby fictions are created; Romantic Irony, however, involves much more than just this particular literary technique. Anne K. Mellor holds that,[3]

> Romantic irony is a way of thinking about the world that embraces change and process for their own sake [...] Romantic irony is both a philosophical conception of the universe and an artistic program. Ontologically, it sees the world as fundamentally chaotic. No order, no far goal of time, ordained by God or right reason, determines the progression of human or natural events. This chaos is abundantly fertile, always throwing up new forms, new creations. But insofar as these forms are static and finite, they are inevitably overwhelmed by and reabsorbed into the process of life. (Mellor, 1980: 4)

Romantic Irony might manifest itself within the technique of the artist breaking the narrative illusion, but that technique reflects a complex philosophy of and commitment to a never-ending process of change. This process was reflected on an individual level by Schlegel's notion of 'never-ending becoming', a phrase which describes a self and world in eternal flux. Within artistic Romantic Irony, this process is expressed via the artist, who 'simultaneously projects his ego or selfhood as a divine creator and also mocks, criticizes, or rejects his created fictions as limited and false' (Mellor, 1980: 17). The philosophy of romantic irony is fundamentally based upon the notion of a never-ending oscillation between order and chaos, creation and destruction.

In Romantic Irony, being is associated with order, and becoming with chaos. Within the process of becoming, there are epiphanic moments when being is achieved, only to be destroyed and subsumed once again in the process of becoming. This oscillation gives rise to a form of negative dialectics:

> In contrast [to Hegel's progressive, transcendental dialectic,] Schlegel's dialectic allows for no genuine resolution or synthesis. The thesis and antithesis remain always in contradiction: being and system can never be united with becoming or chaos. These two opposed principles stay in constant conflict; and the function of philosophical irony is to examine their intrinsic and insuperable contradiction. (Mellor, 1980: 11-12)

This negative dialectic may manifest itself as a conflict between two contrary elements or characters in a fictional narrative, and

> More generally, artistic irony can manifest itself in the work of art as a process of simultaneous creation and de-creation: as two opposed voices or personae, or two contradictory ideas or themes, which the author carefully balances and refuses to synthesize or harmonize. (Mellor, 1980: 18)

We can see examples of such contradictory ideas and personae in Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988) (hereafter referred to as *TSV*), with the opposition of Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta, and in *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990) (hereafter referred to as *HSS*), with the elements of light and darkness or speech and silence. Similarly, in Carter's *Heroes and Villains* (1969) (hereafter referred to as *HV*), we find rationalist Marianne opposing the 'barbarian' Jewel, and in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Dr. Hoffman* (1972) (hereafter referred to as *IDMDH*), the rationalist doctrines of the sinister Minister oppose the imaginative creations of Dr. Hoffman.[4]

A.W. von Schlegel maintained that 'the romantic delights in indissoluble mixtures; all contrarieties.' (Schlegel, 1894: 342)[5] His conception of the romantic highlights both the problematical idea of unification (which we will address later in terms of the impulse in Romantic poetry to merge subject with object), and the oppositional mode of Romantic Irony. With respect to the contraries of romantic irony, Northrop Frye believes,[6]

> Romantic irony revolves around de Sade and the so-called "Romantic agony," the sense of the interpenetration of pleasure and pain, beauty and evil, intensity and destructiveness. There are two chief recurring characters. One is an exile or outcast figure [...] The ironic outcast is [...] a *desdichado* figure [...] His female counterpart is an elusive or sinister *femme fatale*, the Romantic embodiment of the cruel mistress of Courtly Love. (Frye, 1983: 43)

Carter's radical study of de Sade, *The Sadeian Woman* (1979) (hereafter referred to as *SW*) here springs to mind, in which she discusses the pleasure, pain and revolutionary potential of a pornography which could include the notion of love. Frye's definition would also apply to Carter's novel, *IDMDH*, named after

the nineteenth century Romantic ironist, which details the adventures of the temporarily exiled Desiderio (a name that, perhaps not coincidentally, contains echoes of the word *desdichado*) and his Platonic ideal, *femme fatale* counterpart, Albertina. However, as we shall see, both Rushdie and Carter further ironise the tenets found in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Romantic Irony; by revealing the falsely dualistic nature of these contraries, they expose the prejudices of imperialist or sexist ideologies. To that end, I will argue that because many of these authors' fictional works further ironise the ideas found in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Romantic Irony, their work represents a contemporary embodiment of that philosophy. However, insofar as these authors in general ironise aspects of the romantic that may not have to do directly with eighteenth and nineteenth-century Romantic Irony, this contemporary version is not restricted to the ironisation of tenets found within the tradition of Romantic Irony we have been discussing here.

It must be pointed out that there is more at stake within this ironisation than just the deconstruction of binary oppositions; the contraries concerned are so deeply embedded within the romantic, that their deconstruction must be viewed in the larger context of how ideas and elements of the romantic are being utilised and ironised in these works. There may be a deconstructing of binaries here,[7] but it is part of a larger, ironic engagement with romance and Romanticism.

Despite the disadvantage of dualities in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Romantic Irony, the idea of contraries as taken up by contemporary authors may still be seen as vital; 'contraries' may be regarded as a form of negative dialectics, or as leading to a process of becoming that questions the notion of linear 'progress' often associated with a particular kind of Enlightenment thinking. Mellor sees the contrary of Romantic Irony itself as acting to revive the process of change within becoming; the conflict between the romantic and the ironic results in the 'romantic' side of the artist

creating form, or order, and in his or her 'ironic' side destroying it, with a subsequent return to a chaotic state, from which the process of creation can begin again. Neither side of the artist, however, dominates within the creative process:

> the authentic romantic ironist is as filled with enthusiasm as with skepticism. He is as much a romantic as an ironist. Having ironically acknowledged the fictiveness of his own patternings of human experience, he romantically engages in the creative process of life by eagerly constructing new forms, new myths. And these new fictions and self-concepts bear with them the seeds of their own destruction. (Mellor, 1980: 5)

We might see the idea of contraries as more of a positive opportunity in this sense; within this philosophy, no one order can dominate forever. A constant dismantling, restructuring and reinventing becomes the order of the day; in some respects, this phase of Romantic Irony resembles the chaotic energies of M.M. Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque, a temporary disruption and subversion of established order. But where, as Angela Carter has pointed out the limitations of carnival, declaring 'I'm thinking about Marcuse and repressive desublimation.... The carnival has to stop',[8] in Romantic Irony, such energy would be regarded less as a temporary outlet, and more as a recurring component of genuine change.

Where the contraries of German Romantic Irony involve self and a demonised or idealised other (i.e. the *femme fatale* or the virgin mother),[9] however, their ironisation in contemporary literature may also be seen as a strategy of reclamation by those who have traditionally been placed in the position of the Other within such discourses.[10] Despite the examples I give above, Schlegel's ideas about the Other have particular resonance for post-colonial as well as feminist critiques, as he 'applied himself with peculiar ardour to Oriental literature' (Schlegel, 1894: 14). In *Orientalism*, Said cites Schlegel's claim that '"It is in the Orient that we must search for the highest Romanticism"'

(Said, 1978: 98). Said's project could be seen as an attempt, as John Whale points out, to ironically reverse these words, in order to see the Orientalism in Romanticism.[11]

Mellor also discusses the implications for individual identity when the notion of contraries is viewed in terms of 'self' and 'other' in German Romantic Irony; of Schlegel's ideas about the self's becoming, she writes that

> becoming is a type of contradiction. In the process whereby p becomes not-p, there must be a period when it must be considered to be both p and not-p. Hence, p = not-p in-the-act-of-becoming. In the process of becoming, then, every thing is simultaneously itself and something other; the all is simultaneously one and diverse. (Mellor, 1980: 27)

According to Mellor, German Romantic Irony looks to a process of self-becoming where the Other is always within; this is still unsatisfactory as a dynamic between self and Other, subject and object, as the self simply 'swallows' the Other (in the same way as Hegel's thesis absorbs its antithesis) in the process of becoming. However, this notion of the 'Other within' has intriguing parallels with the notion of hybridity we will discuss in Chapter Three, when we examine Rushdie's ideas about cultural hybridity. The 'other within' might also, in yet another context, refer to an individual's unconscious desires and constructions. The notion of such an otherness within may help to explain Todorov's relation of Freud's internalised uncanny to external, projected images of the fantastic, which we will discuss later in this introduction.

The Relationship Between German Romantic Irony and English Romanticism

German Romantic Irony has several points in common with British Romanticism; both are seen as reactions against Neo-classicism,[12] and both movements emphasise the individual and his imagination and passions as a means of overthrowing a literature and a culture steeped in ideas of

Rationalism, Universalism and progress. (In that respect, both can be seen to follow on from earlier ideas of sensibility.) In Britain in particular, the turn to imagination in Romanticism seems to have been at least partly due to a reaction against the notion of life as quantifiable (by scientific empiricism), and as mechanised and dehumanised (a fear perhaps largely precipitated by the Industrial Revolution). Whether the turn inwards to the imagination was a form of solipsism in the face of social change, or a sublimation of revolutionary tendencies after the failure of the French Revolution, and there are arguments either way,[13] the English Romantics in particular gained a reputation for staging a revolution of the imagination. This 'love-affair' with the imagination is also a marked characteristic of the German Romantic Ironists, who revered the imagination and its expression in the fantastical and the dream-like.[14] Within the work of the contemporary authors we are examining, we may see the expression of a commitment to Romantic imagination appearing in many forms (the advocacy of imaginative transcendence, the fantastical, etc.), and these will be discussed later in this chapter.

It is a small yet significant leap from the artist as imaginative revolutionary to the artist as hero. While discussing the Romantic artist and imagination in *Culture And Society*, Raymond Williams charts the ideological development of the 'artist' as an heroic being; i.e. the literary artist as a special individual who creates a special form of redemptive, though secular, discourse. Williams views this development of literature and the visionary/prophetic, hero-artist as a response to market-forces which threatened to make the individual and literature just one among many products.[15] In *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries*,[16] Marilyn Butler attributes this development of the artist as hero to the public rage for literary lives, and an admiration for those who could create 'simpler, more colourful imaginative worlds, dominated by heroes of superhuman effectiveness' (Butler, 1981: 2).

In *Oracles and Hierophants: Constructions of Romantic Authority*,[17] David G. Riede maintains that

> extravagant claims for the imagination, or "poetic genius" emerged in the early Romantic period and were sustained and augmented by a poetic and critical tradition throughout the nineteenth century. (Riede, 1991: ix)

Frye places the emphasis of the artist-hero within the poet himself; the poet's sense of his own heroic imagination affirms his individuality, and fuels his quest for an apocalyptic vision, the imaginative destruction of the old, corrupt order, and the envisioning of new beginnings.[18] And in *Milton's God*, William Empson points out the appeal to the Romantics of Milton's Satan, as a heroic harbinger of anti-authoritarian apocalypse.[19] Thomas Carlyle even wrote a book on heroism, attempting to reaffirm his reactionary politics with a conservative notion of the hero as commander and king.[20] Certainly, many of the German Romantic Ironists and the British Romantics did not find it amiss to cultivate a confusion between the poet and his marvellous imaginative creations, with the result that the creative individual himself often seemed heroic and anti-authoritarian, whether this was actually the case or not. The artist-hero, self-promoted and supported by a public desire for such a figure, was purportedly committed to the imaginative transformation of the world. In chapters Three and Four we will examine the notion of the artist-hero and its contemporary evolution and ironisation in the works of Salman Rushdie and Ben Okri, and connect this idea to their common and emphatic advocacy of the imagination, in particular as a means of self-creation. We will also discuss how the contemporary, ironic evocation of the artist-hero within the post-colonial literature in question might be viewed as a strategy to empower disenfranchised cultures by means of imaginative redemption.

Another characteristic for which German Romantic Irony and British Romanticism are both noted is a particular sense of self-consciousness and alienation; this may, in part, be due to the influence of Kantian philosophy on both.[21] Schlegel was extremely influenced by Kantian German

Idealism, which placed an emphasis on the phenomenal as separate from the noumenal, and on how people's minds shaped, rather than passively received, sensory data. For Schlegel, the Romantic poet was one who felt the split between the real and the ideal, between the phenomenal subject and the noumenal object, between self and world, and tried to heal this split with individual passion, and with great imaginative acts. So, too, did many of the British Romantics feel man's alienation from nature, or from the objective world, and the need for reconciliation through imaginative means. Frye terms this need for subject to merge with object as, 'a wistful longing for a reintegration with nature' (Frye, 1983: 9) and sees this longing, along with many critics, as corresponding to a yearning for an unfallen, Edenic state.[22] Highlighting the socio-political dimension of such a yearning, Riede points out that this notion of a unified self solves 'the problem of fragmentation of human identity within capitalist society' (Riede, 1991: 25). While there may certainly have been material, political spectres behind this alienation as well as psychological ones, the emphasis in determining what is 'Romantic' in both German and British literary Romanticism has been greatly affected by the idea of a psychological split between perceiving subject and perceived object.

A.W. von Schlegel's rhetoric concerning the subject-object split is particularly telling with regard to issues of imperialism; he writes, in

> the contemplation of infinity [...] The soul [...] breathes out its longing for its distant home [...] To reconcile these two worlds [Nature and human nature] between which we find ourselves divided, and to blend them indissolubly together. (Schlegel, 1894: 26,27)

Significantly for post-colonial criticism, home for Schlegel is a distant land, and to reach that home the subject must merge completely with Nature; such a 'reconciliation' conjoins easily with imperialist rhetoric designed to promote empire's expansion. It contains a built-in rationale and justification for

colonisation, as the means by which the imperial subject can return to the long-lost land of his origin, a justification familiar to historians of WWII.

As we will see, the importance of the romantic to this study lies partially in who has positioned himself as the subject, and who or what has been constructed as the corresponding object, and the problematics this dynamic still produces for feminist and post-colonial criticism.[23] The dynamic of self and other gains prime importance, for example, when the Other is constructed as the embodiment of primal chaos or as a primitive, bestial entity, constructions which are challenged in *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) (hereafter referred to as *PNE*) and *TSV* respectively. Likewise, the Romantic desire for a unified self, achieved by subsuming the Other/the object, has interesting implications in the face of the cultural fragmentation represented by the migrant and the hybrid. We will explore how these forms of identity, or non-identity as it might be more appropriate to term them, are connected to the ironisation of the Romantic imagination. To these ends, this study will examine various contemporary responses to the Romantic subject-object relation, as we have defined and will continue to define it within this chapter.

Critics differ as to the degree or manner in which they think German Romantic Irony influenced British writers towards formulating their own Romantic Irony. Certain Romantic writers may have found irony a more viable force than others; Blake and Byron are often considered Romantic ironists in this manner, whereas someone such as Thomas Carlyle was more directly influenced by the German Romantic ironists.[24] Wellek maintains that Coleridge took the material for many of his literary lectures from the work of Friedrich von Schlegel, in an almost plagiaristic fashion.[25] David Simpson feels that 'English Romantic irony' is 'coinstantaneous with rather than caused by, developments in the German tradition' (Simpson, 1979: 189).[26] His view of English

Romantic irony ('Romantic irony' is meant to indicate irony within the English Romantics, as opposed to German Romantic Irony) is similar to Mellor's conception of German Romantic Irony:

> English Romantic irony, broadly put, consists in the studied avoidance on the artist's part of determinate meanings [...] It involves the refusal of closure, the incorporation of any potentially available "metacomment" within the primary language of the text, the provision of a linguistic sign which moves towards or verges upon a "free" status, and the consequent raising to self-consciousness of the authoritarian element of discourse, as it affects both the author-reader relation and the intentional manipulation, from both sides, of the material through which they communicate. (Simpson, 1979: 190)

Simpson and Mellor both emphasise the objective of freedom within the philosophy and art of 'Romantic Irony', to be achieved by the disruption of any totalising system of discourse. Simpson is, however, more interested in how this disruption happens at the level of language and discourse.

In his discussion of English Romantic irony, Simpson discusses the relationship between irony and literary metaphor in the work of the English Romantics.

> The connection between irony and metaphor in Romantic aesthetics [...] is that the recognition of the metaphorical status of language itself, both as it is created and as it is received [...] involves the simultaneous commitment to a system of meaning-production which is ever expanding and proliferating, and yet ever evasive, ever digesting itself as the means of an ongoing process. (Simpson, 1979: 193-4)

In Simpson's explanation of a meaning-production made fluid by ever-changing metaphors, we may find echoes within Salman Rushdie's work, for example, *HSS*, in which the Sea of Stories is 'ever expanding and proliferating,' with the help of the Plentymaw fishes, who digest the old stories to create new ones. Also significant is Rushdie's pervasive fascination with the idea of metaphor and the metaphorical self in the forms of the migrant and the hybrid, figures which may owe their existence in part to an idea similar to that in Romantic Irony of the eternally becoming self, forever moving and changing. We will see how this idea is further ironised in Rushdie's work when we look

at the problem of constructing self and other with regard to ideas about the migrant and the hybrid.

To return to the connections between German Romantic Irony and English Romantic irony, Steven Alford points out the importance of imagination for both, but emphasises the difference between Schlegel's and Blake's view on the imagination: 'whereas for Schlegel the imagination is a mode of apprehension of reality, for Blake the imagination (also called the Poetic Genius) *is* reality' (Alford, 1984: 115).[27] He interprets Schlegel's oscillation between being and becoming as an alternation between momentary transcendence when subject and object supposedly merge (when 'being' is reached in a performative, epiphanic moment of irony, which he calls the irony of irony), and negative dialectics (resulting from the process of 'becoming') where irony exists as the disrupting factor that prevents subject and object from undergoing a synthesis. In other words, subject and object merge in being, but remain separate in becoming. This dynamic will become important when we examine similar notions in Okri's work, and how they relate to his creation of what might be provisionally and problematically termed an 'African spiritual consciousness'. The relationship between subject and object, and the potential merging between the two, also becomes important when we examine Carter's response to this dynamic in *PNE*. Carter herself has acknowledged Blake's tremendous influence upon her,[28] and this can be seen in *PNE*, where she recreates her own version of Blake's Beulah. Alford suggests that, 'The unity of Beulah is analogous to Schlegel's Romantic unity' because Beulah is the place "'where contraries are equally true"(M 30:1)' (as quoted in Alford, 1984: 149). We shall see how Carter satirises this Romantic unity in her Beulah, which is run by the man-hating, militant Mother. Blake's Beulah may be the place of 'Maternal love', of sanctuary, sleep, and passivity, but Carter's Beulah is an ironic revisioning which satirises and criticises the objectification of the feminine, specifically (M)other Nature. We will explore this more fully in

Chapter Two, after having discussed, later in this chapter, the Romantic sublime and its relation to the figure of the (M)other.

The Relationship Between German Romantic Irony and Romance

German Romantic Irony began to be defined after Schlegel's use of the terms 'romantic' and 'irony' to variously describe his aesthetic in the late eighteenth century. Before him, as Hans Eichner notes,[29] Thomas Warton, in *Observations on the Faerie Queen* (1754), established the concept of "'romantic poetry", embracing the medieval romances' (Eichner, 1972: 6) and juxtaposing 'classical' and 'romantic' for the first time. Whereas Warton's distinction is chronological and descriptive, and expresses some admiration for the romantic, Schlegel's use of the term becomes prescriptive; Schlegel declares that he is a '"romanticist"', who thinks that 'everything that matters is or ought to be romantic' (Eichner, 1972: 6). This prescriptive sense of the romantic soon spread in popularity to France, via A.W. von Schlegel and his association with Mme. de Stael. Freidrich von Schlegel declared that romantic poetry was 'subject to no rules' (Eichner, 1972: 7) and A.W. von Schlegel popularised the idea that 'Classical literature tended towards the purity of the *genres*, romantic literature towards "indissoluble mixtures"' (Eichner, 1972: 7). Together, they expounded the transgressive and excessive tendencies of Romantic literature; Romantic literature was both uncontainable and what me might characterise today as a hybrid, subject to eternal mutations within Schlegel's process of becoming.

Romance also appealed to Schlegel because of its focus on Courtly Love, and on heroic action; love was the perfect ideal to strive for, and to ostensibly reach in an epiphanic moment by heroic, artistic efforts of imagination. Love and other forms of order represented an ideal being, while

imaginative strivings contributed to an individual's chaotic becoming. A distinct problem arises, however, as a result of constructing woman as the focus of Courtly Love and the romantic love that evolves from it. The woman as such is regarded as an unattainable love object, and is virtually excluded from experiencing this process of becoming, and further excluded from becoming (or being regarded as) an heroic imaginative genius.[30] Instead, woman becomes the figure upon which male identity constitutes itself, i.e. as the object of men's desire, and a catalyst for action and/or discourse. In the literature we will explore, the idea of romantic love (*Eros*) is tremendously important, in Carter's work especially. We will discuss with respect to her work how love, while remaining deeply connected to ideas of self-creation, comes to enable a more fluid sense of identity, a force for the partial dissolution of the subject/self, rather than the means of its constitution. We will also investigate how the idea of romantic love is utilised in the work of Rushdie and Okri, discussing various connections suggested in their work between romantic love and acts of literary self-creation. With regard to Rushdie and Okri, we will ask whether or not the representation of romantic love in their work is afflicted by the same shortcomings concerning issues of gender as that of their Romantic predecessors.

To return to another relationship between German Romantic Irony and romance, the eighteenth century German interest in the romantic had its nationalistic side as well:

> There was a new and productive interest in folklore and folksong [...] and, as writers began to turn to their own national heritage rather than to Athens and Rome for inspiration, historical plays and novels came into vogue [...but...] Above all, the concept of 'romantic poetry' had from its very beginnings emphasized the role of the marvellous, the imaginative, and the unashamedly fictitious in literature [...] an unprecedented faith [...] in the importance of the poetic imagination. (Eichner, 1972: 11)

The fantastical for Schlegel and others may have involved marvellous fictions, and faith in the poetic

imagination, but there were political and nationalist uses to which these fantastical elements could be put.

Members of the first generation of German Romantics often had extreme nationalist sympathies, however abstractly they might be expressed in their writings; in his 1809 Author's Preface to the *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, for instance, A.W. von Schlegel's rhetoric expresses a desire for German unification, proclaiming a sense of German destiny, and highlighting the innate superiority and racial purity of the Germans. He writes,

> In the mental dominion of thought and poetry, inaccessible to worldly power, the Germans, who are separated in so many ways from each other, still feel their unity: and in this feeling, whose interpreter the writer and orator must be, amidst our clouded prospects we may still cherish the elevating presage of the great and immortal calling of our people, who from time immemorial have remained unmixed in their present habitations. (Schlegel, 1894: 6)

And as Robertson notes, two of the most famous members of the second generation of German Romantics, Wilhelm and Jakob Grimm, collected fairy tales specifically to 'reflect more faithfully the mind of the German Volk' (Robertson, 1931: 457). Fairytales and folklore became a means of cohesion of an essential, unified, national identity.[31]

It is important to note the pervasive influence and intertextuality these types of texts have in general upon and with the work of Carter, Rushdie and Okri, for example in Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* (1979), or Rushdie's use of *Tales From The Arabian Nights*, or Okri's use of the Ogun myth. Their uses of such texts range from feminist and post-colonial rewritings of patriarchal and nationalistic narratives, to a celebration of the imaginative possibilities evoked by these narratives; we will discuss these propositions later in this chapter and throughout the thesis.

Further Characteristics of Romance and Romanticism, Towards A Definition Of 'The Romantic'

Having begun in a rudimentary way to define romance and Romanticism, we can now expand those definitions. In doing so, we will focus our investigation around the aspects of each that will be most important to the present study. Romance is a broad term (this is perhaps the reason most choose not to identify it with a capital letter, even when referring to the genre); however, it can be applied in both general and specific contexts. Frye, for instance, believes that the *mythoi* for romance narratives underlie both the epics of ancient Greece, and stories in the Judaeo-Christian Bible. These texts may differ in respect to the hegemonic authority awarded to each narrative, but the same structure of romance is present in each.[32] Thus for Frye, the structure of romance exists in our earliest narratives, and the *mythoi* not sanctioned by a dominant authority become channelled into a more unregulated discourse, such as folktales, fairytales, etc.[33] Not surprisingly, with this in mind and as we have noted, all of the authors in the present study draw heavily from fairytales and 'folk' literature, modes of the fantastical.[34]

Within Frye's view of romance, romance is opposed to 'reality',[35] romance being 'antirepresentational' and based in 'imagination'. This distinction is reminiscent of M.H. Abrams' metaphors describing pre-Romantic mimetic literature as a mirror, and imaginative Romantic literature as a lamp.[36] Where mimetic literature is concerned with mirroring external reality, romance is fantastical, marvellous, not restricted by conventions of realism or historical accuracy, though there may be certain stock traits or events which happen within a romance. Frye identifies certain characteristics of heroes and heroines of romance that become significant to us, as they often appear in an ironised form in the literature we will examine: heroes go on quests and journeys, possess great

strength and luck, perform daring rescues; the heroine is inevitably a virgin, and is defined primarily in 'relation to the man whom she, or her creator, is determined she shall marry' (Frye, 1976: 78) i.e. the hero of the story. Often she suffers at the hands of her enemies, and is reduced to slavery and the endurance of torture, and/or married off in a sacred context. Frye tells us,

> With the rise of the romantic ethos, heroism comes increasingly to be thought of in terms of suffering, endurance, and patience [...] This is also the ethos of the Christian myth, where the heroism of Christ takes the form of enduring the Passion. Such a change in the conception of heroism largely accounts for the prominence of female figures in romance. (Frye, 1976: 88)

Carter often ironises this idea of the suffering, virgin-bride heroine and her noble, rescuing 'hero', especially in *PNE* and *HV*. The role of romantic quests and journeys taken by an heroic poet-figure figures prominently in the work of Ben Okri, and serves as the central structure of *HSS* (though in the latter the use of the hero-figure is quite ironic). In a more general sense, we can see the picaresque journeys of Carter's novels as also belonging to this tradition of romance, and for Harold Bloom,[37] it is this 'mid-eighteenth century revival of a romance consciousness out of which nineteenth-century Romanticism largely came.' (Bloom, 1971: 14)

This mytho-poetic view of romance we have been discussing is significant for the idea of the historical epic romances developing in Medieval and Renaissance Europe; the epic romances were influenced by traditions of Courtly Love, and they took as their heroes the questing knights of a feudal world, who encountered challenges in the unknown natural world:

> In the Romance genre, in the shape of the forest in particular, nature is the medium within which the questing knight achieves honour in isolation. It is a place of individual passions, of "adventure, love, and spiritual vision [...] a locus of action, transformation and growth [...] the focus of narrative resolution, and hence [...] a landscape which may be essential to the progression and construction of the narrative". (Saunders, 1993: ix-x)[38]

The medieval epic romance involves a hero on a quest of adventure, love, and spiritual transformation through the encountering of the threatening and enlightening mysteries of the natural world, often in the shape of the forest. In the later 'movement' of Romanticism, and I place inverted commas around the word movement to reemphasise that 'the Romantic movement' is a construction after the fact,[39] this might be viewed as corresponding to the artist-hero's relationship to nature, encounters with nature representing encounters with the artist's own liminality and powers of transformation. Frye relates that

> The Middle Ages itself, like all ages, had its own anti-mimetic tendencies, which it expressed in such forms as the romance, where the knight turns away from society and rides off into a forest or other "threshold symbol" of a dream world. In Romanticism this romance form revives, so significantly as to give its name to the whole movement, but in Romanticism the poet himself is the hero of the quest. (Frye, 1983: 37)

In particular with regard to Rushdie and Okri, we are interested in these ideas of artistic liminality, and perceptual transformation of the world through imaginative means, as these are key components of the Romantic imagination. Within this perspective, romantic love and the Romantic sublime may be viewed as two modes of liminal, transformative experience, and we will explore them further as such, later in this introduction and within individual chapters.

Aside from expounding the ideals of Courtly Love and the adventures of questing knights errant, epic romances began to possess a nationalist agenda; for example, Camoens' *The Lusiads*, written in the sixteenth century, promoted Portugal's superiority as a colonising power. As in the case of *The Lusiads*, such epics were often also a rallying cry, in response to the perceived crisis or decay of a country's position as a dominant power. Later, we shall see how Rushdie both echoes and

satirises the project of Camoens' epic romance in *The Moor's Last Sigh* (1995) (hereafter referred to as *TMLS*), to comment upon various nationalistic failures of his characters of Portuguese descent in India, and upon the failings of India itself as a nation.

One of the predominant characteristics of romance, epic or otherwise, that we must reemphasise, is its fantastical nature, its opposition to 'reality'. For this reason, both Frye and Frederic Jameson see romance as a genre possessing tremendous possibilities for subversion.[40] Within Romanticism, this principle of romance was emphasised through notions of imagination and fancy; the fantastical elements of romance came to exemplify the powers of human creation, and the ability of the imagination to transcend or to see beyond the clouded vision of everyday life. It is arguable that the contemporary genres of fantasy and science fiction evolved from the genre of romance, as well as the nineteenth century gothic novel, with which Carter is often associated. Some critics might wish to make clear divisions between romance and fantastical or speculative literature, but for our purposes it is not necessarily useful to do so.

In this study, the authors concerned will be placed within an historical context of romance and Romanticism that emphasises aspects that may appear in 'sub-genres' of romance, but are not specific to them. Additionally, for the purposes of the present study, 'gothic' influences should be regarded as requiring a completely separate treatment, outwith the bounds of this thesis. Indeed, if as Leslie Fiedler argues,[41] the primary meaning of the gothic romance novel 'lies in its substitution of terror for love as a central theme' (Fiedler, 1990: 134), it would be impossible, with the emphasis on romantic love's potential to empower the 'heroes' and 'heroines' in these authors' works, to see them as primarily gothic. (Having said that, such an adjective might be more appropriate in the case of Carter's earlier, much bleaker novels.) Instead, in defining romance in a more general way as the

literature of the fantastic, having in a fundamental sense to do with notions of romantic love, imaginative vision and heroism, we can emphasise the ideas within Romanticism which evolved from these notions.

This definition may also allow us to concentrate more on the intertextual relations between these authors' contemporary texts and previous texts of romance (and Romanticism), rather than focusing on divisions within the genre. These intertextual relations may range from rewritings of elements from earlier texts of romance and Romanticism (i.e. the character Camoens' nationalist ideas in *TMLS*, or Beulah in *PNE*, or Carter's *Love* (1971) as an admitted rewriting of Benjamin Constant's romantic novel, *Adolphe*[42]), to rewritings of ideas found in romance and/or Romanticism in general (i.e. the idea of the artist as hero, the emphasis on imagination, or the repressive subject-object dynamic that exists between the poet and (M)other Nature). Additionally, by concentrating in general on ideas of love, the fantastical, and heroism, the definition of 'the romantic' used here can be taken from elements within romance that were proleptic for certain ideas within Romanticism.

There are very specific ideas we are interested in with regard to Romanticism; we have shown and will continue to show here how they relate to romance. What is significant for the present study is their presence *as well as their ironisation* in the literature we will examine. Many of these ideas are interconnected, and these connections will become clearer when they are discussed at length in each chapter. Briefly, to list these ideas, they are: 1) transcendent Romantic imagination and a linked concern with origins; 2) the fantastical as a potential means of liberating individuals from a repressive reality; 3) the dynamic of the Romantic sublime as a means of creating a subjectivity for the artist, as he uses his imagination to objectify (M)other Nature, and the ironisation of this idea within the texts in question; 4) the quest for love, and its subversive potential; 5) the idea of the artist as a

visionary hero, and to a certain extent, the idea of the heroine as a suffering virgin-bride; 6) apocalyptic destruction of the current order as a potential means of improving the condition of individuals; 7) a recurrent usage of the myth of the Fall; and 8) the idea of 'contraries' and the deconstruction of their polar opposition, as discussed earlier in this introduction. These ideas found within 'the romantic' are prevalent within the literature we will discuss, and their ironisation holds significance for both feminist and post-colonial theory.

To clarify certain of the above aspects of the romantic, we differentiate transcendent Romantic imagination here from the more general term of the fantastical imagination. We may say that transcendent imagination is found within Romanticism, and its purpose is to achieve a sense of unity between self and nature or the supernatural; fantastical imagination refers in a more general manner to the fantastical (not based upon realism of representation) traditions of romance, and includes transcendent imagination within this tradition. As T.J. Diffey notes, the idea of transcendent Romantic imagination is itself subject to a division between the idea of a transcendent imaginative vision (the artist perceiving and/or creating this world more clearly via his imaginative powers) and the idea of a transcendent plane of existence, accessed via imaginative vision.[43] In chapters Three and Four, we will examine the work of Rushdie and Okri in light of the former: transcendent imaginative vision.

We have thus far discussed the Romantic imagination, and what that entails with regard to romance and Romanticism. At this point, it might be useful to return briefly to Frye's work on Romanticism to reiterate how some of the concepts *within* Romanticism are related, though a more thorough understanding of this interrelation will only be possible after discussing their presence in the texts concerned, within individual chapters. Frye tells us that,

> Translated into Romantic terms [...] What corresponds to the older myth of an unfallen state, or lost paradise of Eden, is now a sense of the original identity between the individual man and nature which has been lost. (Frye, 1983: 17)

Thus the presence of the myth of the Fall is indicative of the subject-object split, the same split that characterises the dynamic of the Romantic sublime. Frye goes on to state that,

> The Romantic redemption myth then becomes a recovery of the original identity. For the sense of an original unity with nature, which being born as a subjective consciousness has broken, the obvious symbol is the mother. (Frye, 1983: 18)

Here we have the second component of the subject-object split, (M)other Nature, with whom the poet must hold imaginative communion if he is to regain a sense of lost unity.

For Frye, this redemption through achieving a unified sense of being is related to a sense of redemption through love:

> the redemption myth in the older mythology [...] Proceeded from a divine love or *agape*. Romantic redemption myths, especially the revolutionary ones [...] throw the emphasis on *Eros*, or love rooted in the human sexual instinct. (Frye, 1983: 20)

Eros is also capable of promoting a unified sense of being, a union with the beloved Other who is a spiritual and physical descendent of a divine Other. Thus the dynamic of the Romantic sublime is connected to a sense of redemptive love, by a common yearning for the unity of self with Other, subject with love-object. This common desire explains why many critics regard the sublime as an erotic 'Oedipal struggle,' (Bloom, 1989: 119)[44] with (M)other Nature occupying the same position as the poet's potential lover. Nature as the sublime object, however, provides an additional sense of the mysterious and oracular, rather than the strictiy erotic:

> The feeling that physical nature provides the missing complement to human nature takes many forms. In proportion as the old celestial imagery declined, it was replaced by the "sublime," which included it but gave it a different context [...] From the

> sublime develops the sense of nature as oracular, as dropping hints of expanding mysteries into the narrowed rational consciousness. (Frye, 1983: 28)

From this description of sublime nature, we can begin to see how the poet, using the divine powers of nature as a source for his imaginative power, sets himself up as an heroic visionary. The Romantic artist as visionary hero cannot exist without a conception of nature as the sublime object, possessed of divine, oracular powers.

Within this mode, the poet becomes the saviour or redeemer of society, by virtue of his extraordinary and cohesive imaginative powers. The Romantic poet

> sees society as held together by its creative power, incarnate in himself [...] He himself steps into the role of the hero, not as personally heroic but simply as the focus of society. For him, therefore, the real event is no longer even the universal or typical historical event, but the psychological or mental event, the event in his own consciousness of which the historical event is the outward sign or allegory. (Frye, 1983: 36)

Through imaginative means, the poet-hero attempts to stave off fragmentation of society and self; the unity the poet seeks is expressed through the metaphor of the poet's self merging with a sublime Nature, while being ironically separated by such a psychological move from the human community. Frye concludes that

> the most comprehensive and central of all Romantic themes, then, is a romance with the poet for hero. The theme of this romance form is the attaining of an expanded consciousness, the sense of identity with God and nature [...] To use the traditional metaphor, the great Romantic theme is the attaining of an apocalyptic vision by a fallen but potentially regenerate mind. (Frye, 1983: 37-8)

Within this view, which is both mythopoetic and psychological, the myth of the Fall, the Romantic sublime, the artist as hero, his alienation and redemption (or a liberating sense of unity) through love or transcendent imaginative means are elements of Romanticism which are deeply interconnected.

It must be emphasised, however, that the poet's communion with sublime (M)other Nature is merely a means to a higher end, and therein lies the key to the Romantic suppression of the feminine as it is associated with woman, or women. As Day points out, 'The ultimate sublime object is, of course, God'. (Day, 1996: 185) For the Romantic poet, communion with Nature is a means by which to forge his own transcendent imaginative capabilities.

Also connected with sublime Nature is the notion of origins; for the poet to approach a 'maternal' Nature, is for him to confront a sense of his own origins, and his own unoriginality, as it were. The poet can no longer conceive of himself as whole within himself, without predecessors, as he appears to be simply a part of some greater, previous being. As Leslie Brisman notes,[45] 'One cannot approach the sublime without enquiry into, or shocked recognition of, origins'. He speculates that perhaps Romantic poets 'discovered individual resolutions to the problems of belatedness...in *fictions* of origins' (Brisman, 1978: 19-20). By creating fictions about origins (in effect substituting fiction for origin), through the transcendent powers of imagination, the Romantic poet would be able to construct his own sense of creative originality. In other words, the Romantic sublime constructs nature as a great mother-figure to be confronted, communed with to achieve a lost sense of unity, then suppressed,[46] in order for the artist to glorify his creative powers and achieve a sense of identity by writing about Nature and his emotional response to it. Mellor notes that, 'The sublime is associated with an experience of masculine empowerment', with the poet as 'perceiving mind' and (M)other Nature as the 'object of perception' (Mellor, 1993: 85). Additionally,

> In recent years feminist critics have forcefully shown how the deepened subjectivity of the exclusively male perceiving self traditionally results in a depiction of the object of perception and desire as female [...] '[Woman's] association with nature and her exclusion from a traditional identification of the speaking subject as male'. (Riede, 1991: 23)[47]

We might recall Wordsworth's declaration in the *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* that, 'man is a mirror of Nature,' i.e. the poet absorbs Nature's immensity and thus enhances his own thought processes, whereafter he produces his visionary poetry.[48]

Given the emphasis here on the sublime in poetry, it may seem incongruous to then talk about ironisations of the Romantic sublime in twentieth-century novels, but in fact the sublime and the novel are intimately connected. As Barbara Claire Freeman notes,[49]

> It is no accident that the rise of the novel occurs at the same time that the sublime comes to the fore in eighteenth century aesthetics, for both depend upon -- or perhaps help to construct -- a distinctly modern subject. (Freeman, 1995: 7)

The centrality of the modern subject within the dynamic of the Romantic sublime is expressed by that subject's need to differentiate itself from that which has gone before. Harold Bloom tells us that the poet's need to construct a fictional origin, and consequently an originality for himself is (according to his argument in *The Anxiety of Influence*[50]) actually part of the poet's motivation in seeking communion with nature as a sublime force. Through a staged interaction with (M)other Nature (or with the supernatural) the poet begins to have his own fiction of creation to tell. Bloom notes that the Oedipal dimension of the Romantic sublime, as it concerns nature, complements the anti-authoritarian stance of many Romantic poets towards an authoritarian, God-like poetic predecessor. This desire by the poet to overthrow a father-figure in order to establish his own poetic authority is intimately connected to the fiction of origins enabled by an interaction with (M)other Nature; nature in turn must be suppressed in order for the poet to turn back to language and create his own sense of authority. Thus we see that many of the above characteristics of the romantic are aspects of the dynamic between the poet-subject and a (sublime) object or (M)other figure, associated with, yet

subsumed by, patriarchal concerns. We will discuss the Romantic sublime further in Chapter Two, where we take up the work of Thomas Weiskel, whose landmark study, *The Romantic Sublime* (1976),[51] attempts to describe the psychology of imaginative transcendence in Romantic poetry.

It is important to note that this anti-authoritarian stance (against God the Author/Father, against an authoritative predecessor) is often expressed within the figure of the Satanic hero. For Bloom, the implications of this have more to do with a self-seeking poetic authority than with direct political dissent. In Chapter Three, we will examine how the figure of the Satanic hero within the work of Rushdie has, conversely, more overtly to do with the politics and the plurality of secular discourse in contrast with sacred, 'original' discourse. We will discuss how Rushdie, using a Satanic artist-figure in *TSV*, further attempts to deconstruct the authority of the author of fictions,[52] and we will examine the implications of whether or not he is successful in his attempts.

To return more directly to the idea of origins, this psychological aspect of Romanticism, while it may not be used for radical political dissent, certainly has dangerously reactionary political ramifications. We can see the fictionalisation of origins at work in the mythology of nationalism, or in the Nazi conception of an Aryan super-race, where the purity of origin as an idea is used to create a group identity with a built-in rationalisation for committing genocide. Within the works we will be discussing, we will discuss how Carter and Rushdie in particular ironise this idea of origins, whether in its connection to the maternal, its association with transcendent imagination, or its implications for a communal identity.

As for the fantastical as a means of liberating the individual, and as oppositional to an oppressive reality, there are several aspects of this that must be discussed here. Firstly, the fantastical is not, in itself, subversive, as Rosemary Jackson has pointed out;[53] it may be as oppressive as the

most rigid of realities. Carter is especially aware of this; in *IDMDH*, Albertina's unconscious fantasies of sexual desire, when brought to the fore, are brutally unpleasant, and reflect the masochistic brainwashing of women by 'real' society. Secondly the fantastical is not identical with transcendent imagination, though one may be a component of the other. Transcendent imagination as such is a construct of Romanticism, and may use the fantastical to achieve a sense of unity with nature beyond 'everyday reality' and/or with the supernatural.

Jackson notes Todorov's division of the fantastical into categories: the marvellous indicates a belief in the supernatural, fantasy reflects the unnatural, and the uncanny is a sign of the natural within the unconscious. These divisions may help us to understand the attraction of romance for these writers, and how they achieve the ironisation of romantic ideas. The Romantics may have cultivated what Todorov calls 'the marvellous' as a substitute for religious faith, and Jackson notes that 'in a marvellous mode...the narrator himself is rarely in a position of uncertainty.' (Jackson, 1988: 33) Thus the use of the fantastic in the mode of the marvellous may indicate the kind of need for control and a self-authorising authority that we discussed earlier, with relation to the Romantics.

In contrast to this, the use of 'fantasy' opens up a space not only for the unnatural (and within this category, the grotesque), but for calling into question what natural and unnatural are. This distinction becomes important when one considers that the Other has often been at the mercy of it, as defined by the standards of what is 'natural' within patriarchal or imperialist ideologies. Certainly, the distinction between natural and unnatural is a crucial issue in the debate about what 'woman' is and how she should act; and both women and colonised peoples have often been constructed in rhetoric as being part of nature, part of the (colonised) landscape. Jackson tells us that 'Difficult or unpalatable social realities' became transformed into the shape of the demonic other: 'monsters,

snakes, bats, vampires, dwarfs, hybrid beasts, devils, reflections, *femme fatales'* (Jackson, 1988: 121). We will see how Carter ironises these uses of fantasy, i.e. in presenting how and why the *femme fatale* is constructed, and how, for instance, Rushdie grapples with the 'unnatural natural' idea of Mother India, and we will discuss further in various chapters the presence of 'monsters... vampires...hybrid beasts'.

Finally, the evolution of the fantastical into 'the uncanny', as an indication of unconscious images and ideas, is useful insofar as contemporary usages of romance may manifest in allusions to dreams, or dream-like worlds, or to repressed images becoming conscious to the individual. For example, *HSS* hints that the fantastical and wonderful events of the novel may take place in a dream, and *IDMDH* depicts a world in which rebel forces work to free the unconscious; ironically, though the fantastical has the potential to free individuals, in the latter case, it only serves to enslave them because their imaginations have been conditioned or colonised by an oppressive reality, an instance of Marcuse's 'repressive desublimation'.[54] This kind of use of the fantastical may liberate the individual, but only by showing her or him the 'true nature' of the unconscious.

There are many instances in the work concerned, however, when the fantastical, in itself, does seem to have a genuinely liberating quality. Fevvers' defiant, fantastical illusions in *Nights at the Circus* (1984) (hereafter referred to as *NC*) enable her to hold on to her sense of identity in the face of patriarchal threats, and the magical abilities of Rushdie's characters often provide the focus for political and imaginative hope in the novels. Beyond this, the delight that the reader takes in what has often been described as 'magical realism' in the work of Rushdie, Carter and Okri, reflects a delight in the sheer powers of creativity and imagination to make the impossible, as it were, seem possible. There is no doubt that this process can be tremendously freeing, in terms of its ability to

wreak havoc on rigid categories of history and identity.

Why 'The Romantic'?

In *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics*,[55] Rita Felski argues that the Romantic ethos (of which Romantic transcendence and the Romantic sublime is a part) within a contemporary feminist context

> calls attention to needs which have been suppressed by prevailing ideologies of modernity and progress and which socialist politics has typically failed to address. (Felski, 1989: 149)

And Patricia Yaeger further identifies the problem[56] with an overly-cynical

> modern world that will not support any wish for transcendence--that laughs at such a wish, and reveals the longing for the sublime as symptom, as an oceanic longing that has been pre-manipulated by the commercial environment of late capitalism. (ed. Kauffman, 1984: 197)

This defence of the Romantic ethos views it as a counter to modern attempts to privilege male ideas of progress, and ideologies which attempt to view us all as 'pre-manipulated'. For feminist and post-colonial theorists as well, I would suggest that there is an advantage to embracing the romantic with regard to its disruption of narratives of progress, and its defiance of 'modern' standards of criticism, though there is certainly a need to ironise the romantic, in order to identify aspects of it which are or have been potentially repressive.

For Rushdie, for example, it is both natural and ironic to play with romance and Romanticism which draws on such diverse and 'exotic' Eastern romance narratives such as *The Arabian Nights*, *The Conference of the Birds* and *The Sea of Stories*; in *Shame*, for instance, Omar Khayyam Shakil reads (not coincidentally) the Burton translation of *The Arabian Nights*.[57] Eichner discusses how

> At one point in the *Observations*, Warton alludes to the origin of romantic fiction in the Orient; this Asiatic origin of romantic imagination is the special concern of his

dissertation *Of the Origin of Romantic Fiction in Europe*. (Eichner, 1972: 63)

while the German Herder associates 'the romantic' 'more especially with the influence of Arabic and Persian cultures and with southern Europe', particularly Spain. (Eichner 1972: 63) This Orientalism, as Edward Said so aptly noted, lends Romantic literature an exotic quality, usually at the expense of the culture and individuals being exoticised. It is interesting that Warton sees the Iberian Peninsula route (i.e. Spain and the Moors) and the Gothic migration as the two channels to Europe of 'Arabian...legend' (Eichner, 1972: 52) when we realize that Rushdie's book, *TMLS*, is set in India and deals with a legend from Moorish Spain, the fall of Alhambra.

For these authors, however, the romantic has a general appeal aside from the opportunity to ironise and reclaim the folklore that the West exoticised for its own purposes. There is an appeal in

> exotic settings and ages [...] wonderful adventure, extraordinary virtue, and intense passion; affording the boundless freedom of wild nature and primitive society as a release from the regulated monotony of modern urban civilization. (Eichner, 1972: 18)

Though Eichner's description itself does not escape from further orientalising (i.e. constructions and descriptions of 'wild nature' and 'primitive society'), these authors certainly take as much pleasure from the 'exotic settings and ages [...] wonderful adventure' and 'intense passion' as they do in demystifying patriarchal and imperialist constructions of (M)other Nature and 'primitive society'. One has only to remember the manner in which Carter satirises Desiderio's encounter with the complex and cannibalistic river-people, or rationalist Walser's amnesiac transformation into a shaman in *NC* to enjoy the revenge of those who have been labeled 'primitive' and 'exotic'.

Aside from their mutual affinity with folklore, both Rushdie and Carter have been associated with magical realism, and Rushdie in particular admits the influence Gabriel Garcia Marquez had upon

his work. Of Garcia Marquez, Karl Kroeber writes,[58] he

> can justly be aligned less with his immediate predecessors than with the original Romantics [...] However one may wish to define his kind of "magical realism," one should keep in mind the relation of the practice to some profound Romantic commitments [...] For the Romantics as for Garcia Marquez, what is true and real for any human being is defined by what that human being is capable of imagining. (Kroeber, 1988: 137)

The same may be said for Rushdie; though his position as a post-colonial writer may lead to the ironisation of certain ideas within romance and Romanticism, we will examine how he retains the Romantic commitment of transforming the world through imaginative means, and an absolute faith in romantic love, even betrayed love, as redemptive. We will also explore these commitments in Okri's work, as well as the idea of romantic love as both subversive and redemptive in the work of Carter, throughout this thesis. There are individual critics who regard Rushdie and Carter as either Romantic or drawing from Romantic sources; Harriet Kramer Linkin, for example views Carter as 'clearly immersed in the Romantic tradition', and talks about Carter's revision of this tradition in 'The Erl-King'.[59] Of the seeming resemblance between Rushdie and one of his narrators in *The Satanic Verses* Gayatri Spivak asks, 'Is this a serious use of Romantic Irony in a contemporary comic format or a caricature of Romantic Irony' (Spivak, 1993: 112)?[60] And Sara Suleri declares Rushdie to be "romantic" and concerned with the 'resacrilizing of history' (Suleri, 1992: 190)[61] However, no critics have discussed the pervasive evocation and ironisation of Romantic ideas in the work of these three authors, as the present study sets out to illuminate.

Theoretical Associations I: The Romantic and The Postmodern

This section attempts to show how the romantic, as it has been defined here, intersects with

not only feminist and post-colonial criticism, but with postmodernist criticism as well. Just as there are many versions of romance and Romanticism, other theoretical terms and perspectives within this study may be defined in several ways. Neither feminist, post-colonial nor postmodernist criticism can be defined according to any one set of principles; each reflects a complex body of thought, containing diverse and often contradictory strains of philosophical thought. What we can say, however, is that the ideas represented by these terms intersect in interesting and important ways, creating significant political ramifications for literature and culture. On the other hand, there are also significant differences to be noted between the ideas expressed by, for instance, postmodernist criticism and post-colonial criticism, though they may share some common ground; these differences in critical perspectives are perhaps, in the end, more important than any similarities. I feel it is necessary to include a section dealing with postmodernist criticism in relation to the other main critical terms, because there are many critics who have cited the work of Rushdie and Carter in particular as being exemplary illustrations of postmodernist fiction.[62] However, I will argue that their fictional texts should not be regarded as postmodernist, or at the very least, postmodernist only in a secondary capacity, and with severe qualifications as to what that term refers.

The first two terms I would like to juxtapose are the romantic and the postmodern. Romance, Romanticism, and Romantic Irony all share aspects, and at times genealogies, with the postmodern. It will be useful here to look at the work of four critics of postmodernism, Diane Elam, Brian McHale, Patricia Waugh and Linda Hutcheon, in order to understand these connections, and the implications they have for the literature discussed within this study.

In *Romancing the Postmodern,*[63] Elam discusses the similarities between postmodernism and the genre of romance, and why romance should be given prime consideration within postmodernist

fiction. She writes,

> Romance, by virtue of its complex relation to both history and novelistic realism, will have been the genre to address the problematic of postmodernity in narrative fiction. (Elam, 1992: 1)

This complicated relation of romance to history and the novel of realism is marked by a concern with excess, a concern it shares with postmodernism, and one which, 'leads to a rethinking of history and culture' (Elam, 1992: 1). Her two main points, that '1) romance should be considered *as* a postmodern genre' and '2) postmodernism *is* romance' rest upon the notion of boundaries which have been exceeded:

> In the case of postmodernism, temporal boundaries are exceeded; in the case of romance, generic boundaries are exceeded. Boundaries, whether temporal or generic, fail to maintain control over that which they are intended to delineate [...] The relationship between romance and postmodernism comes about as [...] the inability to stay within historical and aesthetic boundaries. (Elam, 1992: 12)

Thus, both romance and postmodernism are not only concerned with excess, but are actually transgressive, utilising excess to go beyond rigid historical and aesthetic categories. This view that romance has, in a sense, always been postmodern, is one way of dealing with the relationship between romance and the postmodern in contemporary fiction. However, it would be too easy in many ways to make that equation, and it would not do complete justice to the complex situation reflected by the texts under discussion.

This is not to say that the common ground of excess between romance and postmodernism is not a useful one to explore; Elam discusses how

> [Henry] James explains that romance is essentially inessential, its only law the law of excess over itself. As such it cannot be the guardian of an originary identity whether national [...] or gendered. (Elam, 1992: 6)

The idea of romance as a genre whose excesses interfere with the establishment or maintenance of originary nationalist or gendered identities reflects the idea of postmodernism as able to critique stable categories of nationality and gender. However, as we have discussed previously, not only is this complicated by the fact that romance may be used for oppressive nationalist or misogynistic ends, but that the creation of national identity may itself be a crucial stage in post-colonial development. Additionally, Elam argues that many postmodernist texts depend for their notions of excess upon the exclusion of 'woman' from the category of history, i.e. as being outside of history, aligned or identified with the excesses of romance. This identification of woman (or in an equally familiar scenario, femininity), with romance's excess, demands that we make a strict delineation between gender and genre. In other words, the significance of gender as a material, political category must not be obscured by the operations of romance which, as the genre of excess, may be used, even or especially within postmodernist criticism, to obliterate the category of gender by equating the idea of 'woman' or 'femininity' with excess.

A slightly different perspective on the situation emerges when one compares the way in which both romance and postmodernism problematise the authority of historical knowledge. Elam's claim that 'The relationship between postmodernism and romance becomes a way in which to rethink narrative and its relationship to the legitimation of historical knowledge' (Elam, 1992: 12) resembles Hutcheon's ideas about historiographic metafiction as a key technique of postmodernist fiction.[64] Though Hutcheon does not involve romance in her calculations, the effect of pointing out the fictional nature of history parallels the process Elam highlights, that of admitting romance's excess into the category of history.

Hutcheon does not connect postmodernism with romance, but she does view postmodernism

as a reaction against 'romantic/modernist notions of self-expression, authenticity, and originality' (Hutcheon, 1990: 14). By excluding the romantic from postmodernism, Hutcheon ignores a significant genealogy of postmodernism, and by claiming that parody and irony are specifically postmodernist strategies,[65] she further overlooks the possibility of Romantic Irony.[66] In *Postmodernism: A Reader*,[67] Patricia Waugh situates postmodernism's beginnings in the Enlightenment, Romanticism and German aesthetics; she details a complex relationship of their influence within postmodernism, and postmodernism's reaction against particular aspects of Enlightenment and Romanticism. According to Waugh, postmodernism is still influenced by and reacting in various ways to the subject-object split precipitated by Cartesianism and Kantian Reason, and to notions of autonomy and reason put forth by the Enlightenment. She believes that the fragmentation favoured by postmodernist thought in part reflects a frustrated desire for the transcendent, unified self (whether achieved through Enlightenment reason or Romantic imagination), and a resulting nihilistic destruction of that self.[68] It must be pointed out as a crucial difference, that this idea of fragmentation contrasts sharply with the fragmentation inherent to a figure such as the migrant or the hybrid, especially since the migrant may refer to an actual displaced person. The nihilistic fragmentation that is part of this version of postmodernism, though rooted in part in a reaction to Enlightenment and Romantic ideas of a unitary self, may thus be somewhat antithetical to a more optimistic idea of fragmentation created by an ironisation of the romantic in postcolonial literature. And while there may be versions of postmodern fragmentation which are more optimistic in their deconstruction of a unified subjectivity, within post-colonial practice, the idea of fragmentation is used as much for the synthesis of identity, as for its deconstruction.[69]

In Waugh's opinion, postmodernism is still following the trend set by Schiller and other

European Romantics, which involved a turn towards aesthetics and away from Enlightenment notions of Reason. Postmodernism expands the Romantic turn towards aesthetics by endowing aesthetics with psychological and political significance, and by breaking down the barriers between what is traditionally seen as aesthetics and popular culture. Postmodernism, however, may still fall into some of the same traps as Romanticism; in declaring that everything is aesthetic, postmodernism could be accused (and often is) of the same solipsism that arguably motivated the Romantic turn inwards towards imagination, glorifying Art and the artist. Though postmodernism purports to overthrow these elitist terms in favour of a more demotic idea of culture, viewing everything in an aesthetic light may tend to obscure materially-based, context-specific political thought. The same holds true for postmodernism's 'micropolitics of desire', as it is often termed; in one sense, this refers to a romantic desire for the Other, which, if not related to a relevant 'macropolitics', risks losing a significant material dimension. In addition to this problem, postmodernism often does not acknowledge how closely its discourse resembles that of Romantic thought; Waugh maintains that Romantic apocalyptic discourse seems to have simply slipped into the way in which postmodernism describes the current epoch.

Unfortunately, Waugh does not discuss the issue of irony with regard to Romantic thought and postmodernism, though she does mention that Ihab Hassan's work

> illustrates very clearly the debt of Postmodernism to Romanticism, developing a Nietzschean understanding of the self as a fiction and working within a dialectic of post-Romantic Imagination and irony: desiring immediacy but recognising the inevitability of mediation. (ed. Waugh, 1992: 23)

According to Hassan, Romantic imagination embodies the desire for immediacy, and postmodernism plays with this, while at the same time ironising that desire; but the idea of romance and

Romanticism as a possible macropolitical strategy for feminist or post-colonial criticism is never emphasised, only the idea and needs of the individual, the desiring subject.

Although Elaine Jordan highlights similarities between Romantic Irony and postmodernism, claiming they both imply 'critique plus creation from the void or the rubble of that critique' (Jordan, 1992: 159), she does not draw a genealogy between them.[70] A critic who does directly acknowledge Romantic Irony's influence upon postmodernism's idea of the self as fiction is Brian McHale.[71] He claims that the technique of placing the figure of the author in the novel as a narrator or character breaks down ontological barriers. In *Constructing Postmodernism*, McHale explores postmodernist fiction's rootedness in medieval romance, in terms of romance's ontological concerns, e.g. its symbolic representations of the world within the world of romance.[72] In *Postmodernist Fiction,* he discusses the role of love in postmodernist as opposed to modernist fiction. Modernist fiction, he claims, foregrounds the epistemological, while postmodernist fiction foregrounds the ontological; love is important because it breaks down ontological barriers between author and character and author and reader. For McHale, love is not related to romance or Romantic thought, merely to its ontological function. This neglect of Romanticism in particular, which, as we have previously discussed, often thematises apocalypse, is curious, as McHale goes on to recount the prevalence in fictional 'postmodernist futures' of 'grim dystopias....a world after the holocaust or some apocalyptic breakdown.' (McHale, 1987: 67) Despite his perceptive relation of postmodernist fiction to medieval romance, it is unfortunate that McHale never fully explores the ontological disturbances caused by a love-relation between character and character, i.e. love's ability to disturb the boundaries of the subject, especially as such a relation might find itself mirrored in the 'external world'.

The romantic and the postmodern, as we have seen within this criticism, occupy much

common ground; a tendency to excess, the disturbing of categories of history, nationality and gender, a continuing reaction against the subject-object dynamic, and a concern with the aesthetic, especially as it applies to the (fictional) creation of the self. We have also seen that the resulting fragmentation of the unified self may be incompatible with post-colonial ironisations of the romantic, and that indeed, these critics rarely connect irony to the romantic. It is further questionable as to whether an exclusive focus on the micropolitics of desire can adequately address macropolitical situations, especially when the level of examination of a concept such as love seems not to progress beyond a discussion of ontological levels within fiction. We can begin to see, and shall discuss further within this introduction, that postmodernism's use of romance may seek to minimalise an emphasis upon the categories of nationality and gender/identity, an emphasis which is, in fact, crucial to the politics of the fiction in question.

Theoretical Associations II: The Romantic and The Post-Colonial

The term 'post-colonial' (or postcolonial) itself can have several meanings. It can refer to a cultural situation in a formerly colonised culture, where formal manifestations of imperialism have ceased, though critics generally agree that informal manifestations of imperialism continue. In neocolonialism, the colonised area may adopt a nationalistic strategy similar to the imperial power's, in order to consolidate the identity of its people, with the end goal of self-determination. In this sense, 'colonialism', 'neo-colonialism' and 'post-colonialism' refer to different stages of contact between imperial and indigenous cultures, although these categories might just as easily be seen to overlap. Chronologically, 'post-colonial' is often associated with the time of a country's formal 'post-independence' and the period post-WWII.[73]

Sociologist Stuart Hall highlights the dual epistemological and chronological aspects of the term 'post-colonial'.[74] For him, the term refers to a complex, ambiguous, and evolving set of global contexts and power relations, which are influenced strongly by the history and ongoing procedures of global capitalism. He sees the critical future of the term as one that moves away from simplistic, antagonistic binaries, and favors what he calls a 'deconstructive logic' that disturbs the 'here/there cultural binaries for ever' (Hall, 1996: 247). In other words, colonisation is present in all cultures, but manifests in a context-specific manner between and within different localities. For Hall, there is no centre/margin duality of coloniser and colonised; instead, he sees that 'the global/local reciprocally re-organise and re-shape one another' (Hall, 1996: 247).

Post-colonialism can in this sense also refer to the situation of cultural diversity resulting from the multicultural mixture of 'imperial' and 'indigenous' cultures, and the global sensibility this may foster, hence many post-colonial writers are also referred to as 'cosmopolitan'. These various ways of defining the post-colonial often overlap, and post-colonial criticism can focus on any or all of the above aspects. Within this overlap, there exist differentiations based upon the degree of conscious resistance to colonialism and its legacy:

> Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin (1991) suggest that post-colonialism can be characterised as having two archives, related but not co-extensive, one which constructs it as "writing [...] grounded in those societies whose subjectivity has been constituted in part by the subordinating power of European colonialism", and a second in which the postcolonial is conceived of as a set of discursive practices involving "resistance to colonialism, colonialist ideologies, and their contemporary forms of subjectifacatory legacies" (1991, p. vii). (Barker, Hulme and Iversen, 1994: 5)[75]

It is the relatedness of these two definitions we are most interested in with regard to the relationship between the romantic and the post-colonial. It is only in acknowledging that the romantic can be both a strategy of colonialism and neo-colonialism, as well as an ironic resistance to 'colonialist

ideologies,' that the political project of the post-colonial authors within this study can be properly understood.

Among the essays in *Nation and Narration*,[76] we find Timothy Brennan, in an essay entitled, 'The National Longing For Form', citing the rise of the nation-state in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as having been supported by Romanticism's 'imaginative literature', by the genre of the novel, in particular:

> On the one hand, the political tasks of modern nationalism directed the course of literature, leading through the Romantic concepts of "folk character" and "national language" to the (largely illusory) divisions of literature into distinct "national literatures" [...] Literary myth too has been complicit in the creation of nations -- above all, through the genre that accompanied the rise of the European vernaculars, their institution as languages of state after 1820, and the separation of literature into various "national" literatures by the German Romantics at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. Nations, then, are imaginary constructs that depend for their existence on an apparatus of cultural fictions in which imaginative literature plays a decisive role. (Brennan, 1994: 48, 49)

Concepts such as national character and language were reinforced by moulding imaginative, Romantic forms of discourse into originary fictions. The urge within Romanticism towards imaginative expression often resulted in nationalist, imperialist discourse, and that discourse was used to reify the nation-state and national vernaculars. In contemporary writing, Brennan asserts that post-colonial writers may use the romantic in ways that either reify Western taste, or subvert national narratives. He points out that the more 'cosmopolitan' of the post-colonial writers may often use the fantastical to exoticise their own work, selling out to the Western taste for the unknown Other, though they may also use it to write 'encyclopedic national narratives that dismember a recent and particularized history in order to expose the political dogma surrounding and choking it' (Brennan, 1994: 63).

Elleke Boehmer takes a different view of this use of the fantastical, by pointing out how post-

colonial writers have adapted Latin American magical realism to their own political uses.[77] I quote Boehmer's synopsis at length, as it usefully details this relationship between the fantastical and post-colonial politics.

> Drawing on the special effects of magical realism, postcolonial writers in English are able to express their view of a world fissured, distorted, and made incredible by cultural displacement. Like the Latin Americans, they combine the supernatural with local legend and imagery derived from colonialist cultures to represent societies which have been repeatedly unsettled by invasion, occupation, and political corruption. Magic effects, therefore, are used to indicate the follies of both empire and its aftermath. However, others -- Okri is here the most obvious example -- take the supernatural more seriously, less as device than as actual mystery, a distortion of the real which is a part of lived experience. (Boehmer, 1995: 235-6)

and

> The fantastical or magic realist novel is believed to dramatize the split perception of postcolonial cultures, and so to undermine 'purist' representations of the world which have endured from colonial times [...] By mingling the bizarre and the plausible so that they become indistinguishable, postcolonial writers mimic the colonial explorer's reliance on fantasy and exaggeration to describe new worlds. They now demand the prerogative of 'redreaming' their own lands. Alternatively, writers may expose the extremities of the neo-colonial condition. The phantasmic is used to evoke an Africa or an India which has run out of food, medicine, and liberation ideals. (Boehmer, 1995: 242)

The fantastical is used to reflect an international situation of cultural displacement, a confusion between imperial and native mythologies and practices with a resulting hybridity of cultures, a parody of colonial uses of the fantastical, a critique of neo-colonial deprivations, and at times, 'an untranslatable strangeness' (Boehmer, 1995: 243), a mysticism and phantasmagoric perception which is a natural part of day-to-day cultural experience. Thus the fantastical can be applied to post-colonial culture on many different, yet interrelated levels. Perhaps only the fantastical is capable of the contortions necessary to embody cultural paradoxes created by the confusion of cultures, mythologies

and political power-structures.

Further to the romantic being a strategy of resistance to imperialism, Doris Sommer discusses the fruitful alliance of romance and nation-building, as an anti-imperialist strategy in Latin America.[78] This strategy is, however, neo-colonial in nature. She points out that 'As in Latin America, European foundational fictions sought to overcome political and historical fragmentation through love', one of the main components in traditional romance. (Sommer, 1994: 84) We will return to the role of love in neo-colonial romance in a moment. The overcoming of political and historical fragmentation to establish a 'native' nation after colonialism is a stage of events common to many formerly colonised countries; they may need to experience a 'nationalist' phase in order to consolidate a stronger sense of identity for the people who have formerly been forced to conform to the standards of an imposed culture. The fact that a people may have adopted to a certain extent the culture of the oppressor, or the situation of the 'native' government being as corrupt and cruel as their former oppressors are both complicating factors.

Still more complicated within this use of romance to foster national identity is the role assigned to women. This role is mainly passive and procreative in nature. Sommer writes:

> Part of the conjugal romance's national project, perhaps the main part, is to produce legitimate citizens, literally to engender civilization [...] Because their power competes with that of the fathers, the active Donas Barbara of foundational romances have to be subordinated, or eliminated. (Sommer, 1994: 86, 88)

In the neo-colonial romance, love is placed in the service of marriage, and marriage ensures not only national stability, but stability of gender roles. Thus, the use of romance within a post-colonial yet patriarchal society will not necessarily prove freeing for woman, who is assigned the time-honoured roles of wife and mother, commanded to stand by her man and ensure that progeny are produced to

rule the nation.

As a result of this tradition of romance in the neo-colonial scenario, and its potential drawbacks, a post-colonial text which employed such strategies would also have to combat its own neo-colonial usages of the romantic; Rushdie is particularly adept at this, using images and leitmotifs of great Indian films in part to illustrate an Indian cultural neo-colonialism. In addition, the issue of gender is one that post-colonial texts using traditions of romance must navigate carefully, as neo-colonial usages of romance often place women in restrictive gender roles.

Theoretical Associations III: The Post-Colonial and The Postmodern

Though post-colonial criticism has much in common with postmodern criticism, in terms of common concerns, aims and techniques, I believe the differences between them far outweigh the similarities. The similarities, which we will briefly discuss here, can be seen largely as the result of similar reactions to dominant power structures. The differences range from political commitments and strategies, to more subtle constructions of postmodernism which may subsume or manipulate post-colonial subjectivity, and in effect reinscribe Western domination. What follows is a discussion of these similarities and differences.

Elleke Boehmer has pointed out some key similarities between postmodern theory and how post-colonial literatures are theorised:

> the way in which postcolonial literatures are explained reiterates some key preoccupations in post-structuralist or postmodern theory [...] The multivoiced migrant novel gave vivid expression to theories of the 'open', indeterminate text, or of transgressive, non-authoritative reading. (Boehmer, 1995: 243)

Viewed from the point of view of postmodernism, the metaphors frequently found in post-colonial texts may provide postmodernism with concrete images for its theories of indeterminacy and transgression. From the point of view of post-colonial criticism, however, these metaphors also refer to a specifically material, political condition. When seen in this light, what seems at first to be common ground may be more of an essential difference; at the very least, to equate the images of post-colonial texts with postmodern representations of indeterminacy, etc. is to disregard the difference between the systems of representation in question, most notably the differences in that to which they refer.

This is not to say that there is not common ground between the postmodern and the post-colonial. Their critical approaches, as Boehmer notes, 'cross in their concern with marginality, ambiguity, disintegrating binaries, and all things parodied, piebald, dual, mimicked, borrowed, and second-hand' (Boehmer, 1995: 244). These aspects, along with a strong interest in how identity is constructed and deconstructed by discourse, constitute a significant proportion of postmodern and post-colonial thought. This similarity can perhaps be explained by a similarity in what each is reacting against; postmodernist and post-colonial discourses are both clearly

> products of a time notable for the growing unsteadiness of Enlightenment thinking and the institutions which have fostered it, such as the late eighteenth or nineteenth-century European nation-state. Both are also clearly spin-offs of a much wider process: the disintegration of Western cultural and political authority in its imperial form. (Boehmer, 1995: 244)

This explanation would account for a similar agenda within much of post-colonial and postmodern literature and/or criticism; both discourses are reacting to the historically determined forces of nationalism and imperialism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as well as critically reflecting the disintegration of those systems.

This common heritage is also one reason why this study is concerned with the conjunction between the romantic, the postmodern and the post-colonial; both the postmodern and the post-colonial intersect with the romantic at these historical 'moments' of empire, and the disintegration of empire, as we have discussed above. This conjunction is why I feel that the work of Rushdie in particular should be regarded as postmodern only if the definition of the postmodern refers in some way to its own Romantic heritage.[79]

To return to the reasons why the post-colonial and the postmodern are seen as having common aims, the editors of *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*[80] conclude that

> the major project of post-modernism -- the deconstruction of the centralised, logocentric master narratives of European culture, is very similar to the post-colonial project of dismantling the Centre/Margin binarism of imperial discourse. The decentring of discourse, the focus on the significance of language and writing in the construction of experience, the use of the subversive strategies of mimicry, parody and irony -- all these concerns overlap those of postmodernism and so a conflation of the two discourses has often occurred. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 1995: 117)

However, despite the similarities, they point out that many such post-colonial critiques precede the theories of Derrida and Foucault, and that one of the major differences between postmodernism and post-colonialism is the political agency awarded within post-colonial criticism to the colonised subject. Both they and Boehmer underscore the specific need for post-colonial criticism to consider material politics and imperialist practices, and to advocate political and discursive agency in order to subvert imperialism.[81]

Aside from the differences between the postmodern and the post-colonial, there are subtler and perhaps more dangerous aspects of postmodernism to consider. One of these aspects involves how the binary of self and other in postmodernism, though challenged in many ways, remains

potentially oppressive. Boehmer notes how the

> discomfort the colonizer experienced was projected onto the native [...] Displacement in its more pronounced forms is characterized by its appeal to the Romantic Sublime. Here the unreadable subject is transformed into the sign of its own unreadability. What happens, typically, is that description admits defeat, submitting to the horror of the inarticulate. (Boehmer, 1995: 95)

We must ask ourselves if the indeterminacy applied to post-colonial texts by postmodernist critics does not contain a ghost of the oppressive dynamic of the 'Romantic Sublime' as it was used to justify imperialism, i.e. as the coloniser's attempt to civilize the wild, horrible barbarity of the colonised and their land. Although unreadability and difference are viewed favourably by postmodernist critics, this enthusiasm for the indeterminate other may contain ominous undertones. As Sara Suleri notes,

> the language of alterity can be read as a postmodern variant of the obsolescent idiom of romance: the very insistence on the centrality of difference as an unreadable entity can serve to obfuscate and indeed sensationalize that which still remains to be read. (Suleri, 1992: 11)

Thus postmodernist critical practices may obscure or appropriate difference, to the disadvantage of non-Western cultures. I do not agree with Suleri's implicit condemnation of romance, however; one of the central tenets of this study is how romance can be reappropriated in an ironic manner, to the advantage of feminist and post-colonial discursive practices.

It should also be pointed out here, once again, that romance is arguably as non-Western a genre as it is a Western one. This is a central difference to consider when deciding to read texts as postmodern versus the romantic in the sense I have been discussing; postmodern criticism is by and large a Western industry, theorised and practiced largely in English, whereas the romantic is neither specifically Western or non-Western. In fact, as we have noted, many attribute the Western

popularity and prevalence of the romance genre to influences from the East. Additional problems with the glorification of otherness by postmodernism can result, as Diana Brydon has observed, in the 'first world' looking to the 'third world' for a sense of native authenticity that it feels itself to have lost.[82] This may be seen as an inversion of the sentiment espoused within Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, as rewritten in the mould of a kinder, gentler postmodernism; the natives are praised for their 'naturalness', rather than condemned for it, and used as a foil for postmodernism's self-critique of the West.

An opposite, but equally problematical situation, involves viewing, as Linda Hutcheon does, the post-colonial as having been contaminated by, and thus complicit with, imperialist powers.[83] Her theory may explain the efficacy of irony and parody within post-colonial literature, as techniques that both subvert and admit a certain complicity with the dominant system; however, the attitude exemplified by Hutcheon's critique generalises where it should seek out the specifics of cultural contexts, and at its worst, implies a dynamic not dissimilar to that of the victim cooperating with the rapist. Other, more general criticisms of postmodernist theory view it as being as imperialist, in its own way, as the nation-state; these criticisms maintain that the spread of postmodernist theory is tantamount to a further imperialistic spread of Eurocentric thought.

As many have noted, the 'post' in postmodern is not the same as the 'post' in post-colonial, though the post-colonial may share much common ground with the modernism and modernity variously implied by that half of the term in postmodernism.[84] Whatever we conclude in a critique of postmodernist theory and its similarities, differences or hidden agendas, we must at the very least admit a divergence between the postmodern and the post-colonial concerning material, political strategies, as well as note an important difference in the post-colonial committment to human agency.

It is this last difference which marks a key usage of the romantic in post-colonial literature; this study will show how the ideas of love and imagination are utilised both to critique oppressive systems, and to retain a sense of agency for the individual. This sense of agency is especially important to an individual seeking to critique the system or systems that have excluded him or her from processes of political decision-making, self-determination and self-creation, and romantic ideas play an important part in creating this agency. As Elam expresses in *Romancing the Postmodern*, 'Not for nothing have the examples that I've chosen, of "Third World" liberation struggles and of the question of women, evoked the two dominant plot modes of the romance: heroic struggle and sexual intrigue' (Elam, 1992: 23). In post-colonial literature, these heroic struggles are both political and imaginative; politics and imagination mix to produce nightmares of power and dreams of empowerment. As we will see, to love another human being is regarded in this literature as perhaps the most heroic of actions; often in this literature, love's power enables individuals to subvert oppressive ideologies.

Theoretical Associations IV: Feminism and the Post-colonial

As Linda Hutcheon notes in *Irony's Edge*,[85] in feminist and post-colonial literature, the use of irony is regarded as a politically viable strategy, precisely because it manages to capture the duality of the Other's position as both (willingly or unwillingly) complicit with, and resistant to, patriarchal and imperialist ideologies. She highlights Irigaray's notion of mimicry as a kind of irony that reveals the elaborately constructed nature of femininity, and allows women to distance themselves from such constructions even as they reproduce them.[86] She compares this dual subject-position occupied by women to the position(s) occupied by 'post-colonial subjects'.

there are also differentiations to be made, so as not to be overly general in assuming their common aims. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin write that

> Feminist and post-colonial discourses both seek to reinstate the marginalised in the face of the dominant, and early feminist theory, like early nationalist post-colonial criticism, was concerned with inverting the structures of domination, substituting, for instance, a female tradition or traditions for a male-dominated canon. But like post-colonial criticism, feminist theory has rejected such simple inversions in favour of a more general questioning of forms and modes, and the unmasking of the spuriously author/itative on which such canonical constructions are founded. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 1995: 249)

It is true that both women and colonised subjects have been constructed as the Other by various hegemonic powers, both patriarchal and imperial, and that feminist theory and post-colonial criticism may have parallels in their respective developments. But the specific cultural situations these theories and criticisms concern themselves with may differ so radically as to make a critique that works in relation to one situation untenable, or even oppressive, when applied to another. Although post-colonial culture and criticism may themselves reflect a patriarchal power structure, a Western feminist deconstruction of patriarchal power may not necessarily be appropriate within a given post-colonial context. Likewise, to say that one construction of the Other is like another, ignores not only specific cultural differences, but also divisions within post-colonial (and Western) cultures of gender and class. This is not to say that feminist criticism has not pointed out various potentially oppressive assumptions behind post-colonial discourse; likewise, post-colonial criticism has helped to highlight the potential limitations of feminist criticism.

What we are interested in within this study is the role of the romantic in feminist and post-colonial literature. This is not to say that all feminist and post-colonial literature will use the romantic in the same manner, and certainly I am not suggesting that these texts are representative of all feminist

in the same manner, and certainly I am not suggesting that these texts are representative of all feminist and post-colonial writing. I do believe, however, that the romantic represents an interesting point of common reference for feminist and post-colonial criticism. In this respect, the romantic would be an 'actual....interrogative' (eds. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 1995: 249) intersection between them. Again, it will be interesting to explore the differences within this common ground, i.e. whether and where the different influences of gender and imperialism determine differences in how the romantic is utilised.

Theoretical Associations V: Feminism and the Postmodern

Given the similar trajectories of feminist and post-colonial criticism, it is not surprising that many of the same problems that exist between post-colonial and postmodern criticism exist between feminist and postmodernist criticism. Both often turn to the strategies of parody and irony to critique a system with which they may be complicit. However, the issue of agency has prevented many feminists from supporting postmodernist theories, fearing that the deconstruction of subjectivity *per se* leaves many women without a base of protest. They ask why (predominantly) male critics wish to deconstruct the phallus, just as women are about to seize its power. It is often argued that those who have been previously excluded from the political agency of subjectivity must be allowed to experience its empowerment before abolishing or destabilising it. Most feminist critics feel at least a partial need to retain the notion that the individual can create change through her actions; there is certainly opposition to displacing this kind of agency with the idea, found in a significant body of poststructuralist and postmodernist thought, that people are constructed by language or discourse. Although the latter area of thought contains scope for empowerment, it largely ignores the emotive

(The one possible exception to this may be *jouissance*, but this is clearly an instance of feminist criticism mitigating poststructuralist theory.) Within this study, we will show how the romantic enables Carter's feminist advocacy of subjectivity and agency, while still allowing her to critique oppressive constructions of identity. Indeed, the issue of agency is crucial in evaluating Carter's work; we can argue that, within the earlier works, her female characters' doomed search for an agency-promoting romantic love foreshadows her later heroines' successful negotiation of romantic love, which in turn enables them to place themselves more confidently within and against the world's power-structures.

The similarities between Western feminist and postmodernist critiques perhaps lie more within the realm of a common reaction to a common 'adversary', the monolithic power structures of a Western hegemony and its desire for and construction of a transcendent, unified, (male) subjectivity.[87] Likewise, as we have mentioned, this is one reason for the similarity between postmodernist and post-colonial criticisms. But those postmodernist critics like Elam and Waugh, who have retained their allegiance to feminism, are likely to be the only postmodernist critics to place an emphasis on the continued need for the category and primary consideration of gender within postmodernism. Thus, in addition to the issue of the romantic, questions of agency and gender must figure strongly within any version of postmodernism that seeks to claim as its own the works of, for example, Angela Carter.

Theoretical Associations VI: Feminism and the Romantic

Much of where feminism and the romantic intersect has already been discussed in the above sections. We have already discussed how the dynamic of the Romantic sublime excludes women as

sections. We have already discussed how the dynamic of the Romantic sublime excludes women as creators; it might be useful to give a synopsis of ideas about the sublime that preceded the Romantic sublime, as well as to discuss contemporary developments within the field of the sublime. Such developments might be seen to correspond to feminist and post-colonial ironisations of the Romantic sublime, particularly in the manner in which they emphasise indeterminacy and excess.

Yaeger, following on from Weiskel, proposes a female sublime to counter the male Romantic sublime, in which she advocates a pre-Oedipal embracing of the other, relations between self and (M)other to be expressed within a non-objectifying, and thus more ethical, economy of expenditure.[88] The main problem with this proposal is the emphasis on 'female,' which tends to essentialise the gender of those involved in the relation, and create an inverse hierarchy. In the introduction to *The Feminine Sublime*, Freeman summarises the history of the sublime from its beginnings with Longinus' *Peri Hypsous*, to its significance to Kant and Burke in the third *Critique* and *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* respectively. She finds within their works 'the traditional sublime of domination which represents the object of rapture as a way of incorporating it' (Freeman, 1995: 3) and finally outlines the possibilities of what she calls 'the feminine sublime'. She differentiates this from a 'female' sublime, emphasizing the feminine as 'a fundamental domain of experience that resists categorization, in which the subject enters into relation with an otherness [...] that is excessive and unrepresentable' (Freeman, 1995: 2). Like Yaeger, Freeman's version of a contemporary sublime is one concerned with formulating an ethical response to otherness, and with bearing witness to this excess without categorising it,[89] a strategy which we will discuss further in Chapter One, as it relates to Carter's work, in particular to the idea of (an)other who is the Beloved. The 'pre-existing construction of "the feminine"' employed in patriarchal

Creating a politics based precisely on such indeterminacy is the premise of Bill Reading's article, 'Sublime Politics: The End of the Party Line',[90] in which he discusses the need for community based on an uncertainty of identification, rather than a consensus based on identity. In Chapter Two, we will discuss the idea of romantic love as sublime, and how love is represented in Carter's work as a way of achieving relations between subjects that are based upon just such an uncertainty of identification.

Feminist criticism can certainly help to highlight oppressive aspects of romance and Romanticism, e.g. Elam's emphasis on the need to deconstruct the feminisation of the genre, although a significant portion of feminist criticism concerns itself with exploring the positive aspects of romantic love; Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous, for example, point out the importance of love and of exploring the erotic relationship between self and Other,[91] and others note the subversive potential of female fantasy.[92] This study will attempt to show how the idea of romantic love is itself redeemed not only within Carter's work, but the work of Rushdie and Okri. Within Carter's work, however, we will examine how the idea of romantic love is first purged of its oppressive patriarchal spectres, before being recommended as a solution to the 'problem' of women's subjectivity. And we will question whether these spectres are exorcised by Rushdie and Okri, or whether the idea of romantic love within their work still constructs 'woman' in the same oppressive manner as did the work of their Romantic predecessors.

1. In his chapter on Schlegel, Wellek outlines Schlegel's separate emphasis on the romantic and the ironic, which perhaps first comes to be combined in Schegel's desire for a system of myth which is also possessed of ironic distance, but is only referred to later by others under the combined term of 'romantic irony'. For a discussion of this, see René Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism 1750-1950, 3 Vols., Vol. 2, The Romantic Age* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1955), pp. 5-35.

2. Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

3. Anne K. Mellor, *English Romantic Irony* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1980).

4. Brian McHale attributes this duality to the 'Manichaeanism of gothic horror fiction', and notes the Apollonian vs. Dionysian dynamic between the Minister and Dr. Hoffman, in *Postmodernist Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1987), (p. 143).

5. August Wilhelm von Schlegel, *Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*, trans. by John Black (London: George Bell and Sons, 1894).

6. Northrop Frye, *A Study of English Romanticism* (Brighton: Harvester, 1983).

7. M. Keith Booker notes this tendency towards dualism and its deconstruction in Rushdie's work in 'Beauty and the Beast: Dualism as Despotism in the Fiction of Salman Rushdie', in *ELH*, v57(4), (Winter 1990), 977-97.

8. Lorna Sage, 'Angela Carter interviewed by Lorna Sage' in *New Writing*, ed. by Malcolm Bradbury and Judy Cooke (London: Minerva, 1992), pp. 185-93, (p. 188).

9. For a discussion of ideal romantic love-objects, see Schlegel, *Lectures*, p. 25.

10. Leslie A. Wilson, *A Mythical Image: The Ideal of India in German Romanticism* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1964).

11. John Whale, 'Sacred Objects and the Sublime Ruins of Art' in *Beyond Romanticism: New Approaches To Texts and Contexts 1780-1832* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 218-36, (p. 235).

12. As Aidan Day has pointed out, in British Romanticism, it was Augustan Neoclassicism that was regarded unfavourably. Aidan Day, *Romanticism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 74-6. This may account for some differences in the political stances between early British Romantics (or those with late Enlightenment values) and German Romantics, the German Romantics being decidedly reactionary in spirit.

13. For the Romantic imagination as (self)-revolutionising, see Harold Bloom, *The Ringers in the Tower: Studies in Romantic Tradition*, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1971), (Ch. 1 and 2); M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953); and Geoffrey Hartman, 'Romanticism and "Anti-Self-Consciousness"' in *Romanticism*, ed. Cynthia Chase (London and New York: Longman, 1993), pp. 43-54. For Romantic imagination as solipsistic, see Day, *Romanticism*, Ch. 2 and 3.

14. For a more detailed discussion of this, see Wellek, *A History of Modern Criticism, 1750-1950, in 3 Vols., Vol. 2, The Romantic Age*, Ch. 2 and 3.

15. Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society: 1780-1950* (Harmondsworth and Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1961), Ch. 2, 'The Romantic Artist'.

16. Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

17. David G. Riede, *Oracles and Hierophants: Constructions of Romantic Authority* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1991).

18. Frye, *A Study of English Romanticism*, p. 37.

19. For an in-depth treatment of this aspect, see William Empson, *Milton's God* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965). Bloom also notes this in *Ringers in the The Tower*, in Ch. 1.

20. See in particular, Thomas Carlyle, Lecture VI, 'The Hero as King. Cromwell, Napoleon: Modern Revolutionism' in *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History* (London, Edinburgh, Glasgow: Oxford University Press, 1912).

21. J.G. Robertson, *A History of German Literature* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons Ltd., 1931). Robertson notes the influence of Kant on several German Romantics, while Wellek, in *A History of Modern Criticism*, pp. 151-187, and Cynthia Chase, in *Romanticism* (London and New York: Longman, 1993), p. 12, note the close relationship between Coleridge and German Romantic philosophy. For a particularly good discussion of the influence of Kant and other German philosophers on Shelley and Coleridge, see Hugh Roberts, 'Shelley Among the Post-Kantians', in *Studies in Romanticism*, v35(2), (Summer 1996), 295-329.

22. Frye, *A Study of English Romanticism*, p. 17.

23. Stephen Copley and John Whale see the two most productive areas for contemporary criticism about Romanticism in feminist and post-colonial negotiations of patriarchal and imperialist narratives within Romanticism, such as certain uses of the sublime within Romantic literature. In Stephen Copley and John Whale, 'Introduction', *Beyond Romanticism: New Approaches To Texts and Contexts 1780-1832* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 1-10 (pp. 8, 9 and 10).

24. In *Romantic Affinities: German Authors and Carlyle, A Study In the History of Ideas* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), Elizabeth M. Vida documents the direct influence of Schlegel

and other German Romantics such as Jean Paul and E.T.A. Hoffmann, on Carlyle.

25. See *A History of Modern Criticism, Vol. 2*, pp. 151-187.

26. David Simpson, *Irony and Authority in Romantic Poetry* (London: Macmillan Press, 1979).

27. Steven Alford, *Irony and the Logic of the Romantic Imagination* (New York: Peter Lang, 1984).

28. In the introduction to *The Virago Book of Fairy-Tales*, ed. by Angela Carter (London: Virago, 1991), Carter admits, 'When I was a girl, I thought that everything Blake said was holy' (x).

29. Hans Eichner, *'Romantic' and its Cognates: The European History of a Word* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1972).

30. This is one of the main arguments in Christine Battersby's book, *Gender and Genius: Towards a Feminist Aesthetics* (London: The Women's Press, 1994).

31. For a discussion of the Grimm brothers' particular role in this process, see *A History of Modern Criticism, Vol. 2*, pp. 283-88.

32. For a more thorough discussion of this, see 'The Word and World of Man' section of *The Secular Scripture*, pp. 3-31.

33. ibid., pp. 8-9, 16.

34. For example, in *Imagining India*, Cronin suggests that *Midnight's Children* has its 'origins in fantasy' (Cronin, 1989: 7) and also notes that the use of the English language to depict India creates a place which is both a fantastical, chimaerical land, and an ironic illusion.

35. *The Secular Scripture*, pp. 35-61.

36. This is one of the main premises of *The Mirror and the Lamp*.

37. In Ch. 2, 'The Internalization of Quest Romance' of *The Ringers in the Tower*.

38. Corinne J. Saunders, *The Forest of Medieval Romance: Avernus, Broceliande, Arden* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1993).

39. As Marilyn Butler has noted, 'Not until the 1860s did "the Romantics" become an accepted collective name for Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott, Byron, Shelley and Keats, and an agreement begin to emerge about what an English Romantic Poet was like. There seems to have been little inkling until the later nineteenth century that such a historical phenomenon as an English Romantic *movement* had occurred. It was not until the twentieth century that there was analytical discussion of the abstraction 'Romanticism', as a recognized term for theories of art, of the imagination and of language.' (Butler, 1981: 1).

40. See Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Routledge, 1989), Ch. 2 and 5.

41. Leslie Fiedler, 'The Substitution of Terror For Love (1960)' in *The Gothick Novel*, ed. by Victor Sage (London: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 130-39.

42. For a discussion of the intertextuality between Carter's *Love* and Constant's *Adolphe* in terms of its treatment of 'sensibility', see Aidan Day, *Angela Carter: The Rational Glass* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 58-63.

43. T.J. Diffey, 'The Roots of Imagination: The Philosophical Context' in *The Romantics*, ed. by Stephen Prickett (London: Methuen and Co Ltd, 1981), pp. 164-201, (pp. 172-3).

44. Harold Bloom, *Ruin the Sacred Truths: The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures 1987-1988* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1989).

45. Leslie Brisman, *Romantic Origins* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978).

46. As Mellor notes in *Romanticism and Gender* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 'In [...] these masculine Romantic constructions of the sublime, a male poet finally speaks of, for and in the place of a nature originally gendered as female' (Mellor, 1993: 90).

47. As quoted in part from Margaret Homans, *Women Writers and Poetic Identity: Dorothy Wordsworth, Emily Brontë, and Emily Dickinson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

48. In their defence, many critics have highlighted that although there is a yearning for the unification of subject and object in their work, Shelley, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Keats and Blake often take the very failure of this unification with the sublime object/Other as the subject of their poetry, and do not necessarily wish to completely appropriate or subsume Nature in their work. The fact remains, however paradoxical, that Nature is still used in this paradigm to create a sense of subjectivity for the poet. For a defense of Shelley's and Blake's treatment of Nature, see Bloom, 'The Internalization of Quest Romance', and for Keats' see John Whale, 'Sacred Objects and the Sublime Ruins of Art'. For a defense of Shelley and Coleridge in these matters, see Hugh Roberts' 'Shelley Among the Post-Kantians', and for a defense of Coleridge, and his use of the sublime to create a selfhood which is not unified but multiple, see Tim Fulford's 'The Politics of the Sublime: Coleridge and Wordsworth in Germany' in *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 91(4), (October 1993), 817-32. Additionally, in 'Romanticism and "Anti-Self-Consciousness"' Geoffrey H. Hartman warns against constructing the Romantic impulse for unity as a simple return to Nature, and stresses it is the *attempt* to overcome the subject-object divide that is important in the Romantic project. It has been noted, however, that many Romantic women writers escape this dilemma entirely in their use of the sublime. For a discussion of this, see Isobel Armstrong, 'The Gush of the Feminine: How Can We Read Women's Poetry of the Romantic Period?' in *Romantic Women Writers: Voices and Countervoices*, ed. by Paula R. Feldman and Theresa M. Kelley (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1995).

49. Barbara Claire Freeman, *The Feminine Sublime: Gender and Excess in Women's Fiction* (California: University of California Press, 1995).

50. Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

51. Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976; reprinted 1986).

52. Anuradha Dingwaney pursues a similar argument in 'Author(iz)ing *Midnight's Children* and *Shame*: Salman Rushdie's Constructions of Authority' in *Reworlding the Literature of the Indian Diaspora*, ed. by Emmanuel S. Nelson (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1992), pp. 157-68. She maintains that Rushdie's narrators construct an already deconstructed, fragmented version of authority.

53. Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 175.

54. Susan Rubin Suleiman notes this in an essay entitled 'The Fate of the Surrealist Imagination in the Society of the Spectacle' in *Flesh and the Mirror*, ed. by Lorna Sage (London: Virago, 1994), pp. 98-116.

55. Rita Felski, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989).

56. Patricia Yaeger, 'Toward a Female Sublime', *Gender and Theory: Dialogues on Feminist Criticism*, ed. by Linda Kauffman (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1995), pp.191-212.

57. Ashutosh Banerjee notes this in 'A Critical Study of *Shame*', *Commonwealth Review*, v1(2), (1990), 71-76.

58. Karl Kroeber, *Romantic Fantasy and Science Fiction* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988).

59. Harriet Kramer Linkin, 'Isn't It Romantic?: Angela Carter's Bloody Revision of the Romantic Aesthetic in "The Erl King"', *Contemporary Literature*, v35(2), (Summer 1994), 305-23.

60. Gayatri Spivak, 'Reading the Satanic Verses', in *What is an Author*?, ed. by Maurice Biriotti and Nicola Miller (Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 104-34.

61. Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

62. Brian McHale in *Postmodernist Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1987) and Linda Hutcheon in *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York and London:

Routledge, 1995) both view the work of Rushdie and Carter as postmodernist.

63. Diane Elam, *Romancing the Postmodern* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).

64. See in particular, Hutcheon's *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, Ch. 7.

65. ibid., see in particular Ch. 8.

66. Linda Hutcheon, *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995); Hutcheon states that she is not particularly interested in the workings of Romantic Irony, and that others have written about its philosophy already. Endnote #3 to the Introduction gives an admirably long list of critics who have written on the subject.

67. Patricia Waugh, *Postmodernism: A Reader* (London: Edward Arnold, 1992).

68. For a more detailed discussion of this, see the introduction to *Postmodernism: A Reader*.

69. Rosemary George makes precisely this point in *The Politics of Home* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 25.

70. Elaine Jordan, 'Down the Road, Or: History Rehearsed' in *Postmodernism and the Re-reading of Modernity*, ed. by Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen, (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1992), pp. 159-79.

71. See McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, pp. 29-30,72,104,122,and 210.

72. Brian McHale, *Constructing Postmodernism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 247-248.

73. See in particular *The Empire Writes Back*, pp. 1-2 for a summary of the definition(s) of post-colonial literature.

74. Stuart Hall, 'When Was "the Post-Colonial"? Thinking at the Limit' in *The Post-Colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons*, ed. by Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 242-60.

75. eds. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen, *Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994).

76. Timothy Brennan, 'The National Longing For Form; in *Nation and Narration*, ed. by Homi K. Bhabha (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).

77. Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

79. In 'What is Post(-)colonialism?' in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. by Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams (New York and London, et. al: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), pp. 276-90, (p. 283), Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge summarise several critics' arguments as to why Rushdie's work should be considered as postmodern, or as both postmodern and post-colonial.

80. eds. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

81. See in particular *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, p. 117, and *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, pp. 233-4.

82. Diana Brydon, 'The White Inuit Speaks: Contamination as Literary Strategy' in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, pp. 136-42, (pp.140-1).

83. In her essay, 'Circling the Downspout of Empire', in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, pp. 130-35, Hutcheon writes that 'The post-colonial is [...] as implicated in that which it challenges as is the *post-modern*' (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, 1995: 134).

84. Boehmer notes European Modernism's impact on writers as various as Soyinka, Okigbo, Rushdie and Okri, for reasons ranging from its pervasive presence on the university syllabus in India and Nigeria, to the aptness of modernism's fragmentation for the expression of alienation in a divided, colonised culture. See *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, pp. 203-4.

85. *Irony's Edge*, in particular, pp. 9-56.

86. ibid., p. 34.

87. For a discussion of this, see *Postmodernism: A Reader*, pp. 189-204.

88. Though her emphasis is primarily on the pre-Oedipal, in 'Toward a Female Sublime', Yaeger advocates other strategies, such as a textual exploration of women's violence, and the depiction of respectful encounters with the other (she gives the example of Elizabeth Bishop's poem 'The Fish', in which a woman catches a fish, but then lets it go again).

89. Freeman, *The Feminine Sublime*, pp. 1-15.

90. Bill Readings, 'Sublime Politics: The End of the Party Line', *Modern Language Quarterly*, v53(4), (December 1992), 409-425.

91. See *Writing Differences: Reading From the Seminar of Hélène Cixous*, ed. by Susan Sellers, (Milton Keynes: Oxford University Press, 1988); and Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. by Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill (London: The Athlone Press, 1993) in particular, for this.

trans. by Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill (London: The Athlone Press, 1993) in particular, for this.

92. In addition to Jackson's *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, Natalie Myra Rosinsky's detailed treatment of this can be found in her book, *Feminist Futures: Contemporary Women's Speculative Fiction* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1984).

Chapter Two: From the Grotesque to the Sublime - Ironic Reworkings of the Romantic Sublime in *The Passion of New Eve, The Infernal Desire Machines of Dr. Hoffman* and *Nights at the Circus*

'LOVE the hideous in order to find the sublime core of it'.[1]

In this chapter, I will examine how Angela Carter parodies and ironises the subject-object dynamic of the Romantic sublime in three of her novels. Through a revisioning of the Romantic sublime (M)other, her fiction negotiates the legacy of woman as objectified Other, and explores the development of erotic love-relations among characters who attempt to overcome their objectification through the cultivation of love. Carter's work also raises questions about the effects of erotic love upon subjectivity, and vice-versa; after a close reading of *PNE*, we will discuss in more detail how Carter's novelistic and journalistic explorations of love-relations suggest the need for an intersubjectivity with romantic love, or *Eros*, as its mediating principle. The first few sections of this chapter deal primarily with the theoretical aspects of this question, in an attempt to outline as clearly as possible the various associations being made between the Romantic sublime, the issue of women's subjectivity, and ideas of the grotesque.

Women's Subjectivity: Woman as Other vs. Women's Otherness

It may be useful, before we go further, to examine the 'problem' of women's subjectivity, specifically the aspect of woman's 'identity' as Other, before turning more fully to the literature in question. The discussion that follows will situate this problematic as woman-as-Other vs. woman's otherness, and explain its potential relation to the Romantic sublime. We can then delineate the reasons why refiguring the Romantic sublime in 'feminine' terms is so important. Some of this may

reiterate what we have discussed in Chapter One, but I hope to further clarify how a feminist reworking of the Romantic sublime might be directly related to Carter's work.

Carter's work has never been associated with the Romantic sublime *per se*, but in *The Female Grotesque*,[2] Mary Russo does associate the character of Fevvers, from *NC*,

with what she calls the 'aerial sublime,' which 'posits a realm of freedom within the everyday'. She relates this to 'the female grotesque,' which signifies a freeing 'deviation from the norm' (Russo, 1994: 11). In *(Un)like Subjects*,[3] Gerardine Meaney concludes that Carter turns away from the sublime, using humour to establish an ironic distance for her narrative subjects. In light of the fact that Meaney discusses the idea of doubling as integral to the Kantian sublime, it is curious she does not classify Carter's use within her fiction of doubled identities and in particular the device of characters who are twins (as in *Wise Children* (1991), hereafter referred to as *WC*) as an engagement with the sublime. And in *Engendering the Subject*,[4] Sally Robinson hints implicitly, if not explicitly, at the presence of the sublime in Carter's work, a telling 'elsewhere of discourse' that 'exceeds the performance of mimicry or parody' (Robinson, 1991: 98).

To return to the issue of woman as Other, this notion and its deconstruction reveal a central theme in French feminist criticism. The French feminist critic Luce Irigaray has identified the problem with having a female identity based on male conceptions of woman as Other, a problem first identified by Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (1949).[5] Shoshana Felman summarizes Irigaray's position:[6]

> Theoretically subordinated to the concept of masculinity, the woman is viewed by the man as *his* opposite, that is to say, as *his* other, the negative of the positive, and not, in her own right, different, other, Otherness itself. (Felman, 1991: 7-8)

When woman is defined as the opposite of man, the term woman is liable to strictures and limitations, predefined by the question and definition of man. Within traditional Western liberal humanism, the term man is one that denotes a subject, while woman as man's Other is reduced to the state of an object, specifically that which is used to legitimate man's identity-as-subject. Thus we have the slippage from Other to object, when the Other is accorded the status of an object.

An alternative to this, as pointed out by Irigaray among others, is for women to find and 'define' otherness in their own right, instead of accepting a male-defined binary. But, as Felman asks, 'how can one speak from the place of the Other?' (Felman, 1991: 9) a place that by its very nature as Other cannot be defined. Perhaps the answer lies within disposing of definitions, which seek to limit, and to begin speaking of an approach that seeks to delimit, both in the sense of pushing the limit further in order to get rid of existing limits (de-limit), and speaking from (de) a limit-point of the self and the text, e.g. speaking from the margin. For women, locating this 'limit-point', this point of entry from margin into 'text' or 'voice', is especially difficult; it involves incorporating a sense of how women have been historically identified as Other, within an ongoing negotiation of 'self'.

This idea of 'the other within', or perhaps what might be viewed as a double-exposure where 'self' and 'Other' are, in a sense, superimposed, may seem to bear some relation to the postmodern idea of alterity, but the issue of women's otherness must be viewed as distinct from the issue of alteration. Learning to cultivate alteration, to speak from the political disposition of the Other, as Thomas Docherty recommends,[7] might be plausible if the move towards subjectivity was not already (ironically) a form of radical difference for the Other who has been denied subjectivity in culture. Rather than courting a notion of alterity *per se*, it might be more useful to view women's otherness in the context of relations with others. As well as designating other individuals, the term 'others'

would include the Other that refers to the position traditionally assigned to 'woman' in relation to a (male) subject. On a practical level for women, creating relations with others involves creating relationships with other individuals, and exploring their own otherness, while at the same time, negotiating their own cultural subjectivities. Part of this exploration of otherness and cultural identity necessarily must focus on negotiating the legacy of woman's position as Other. The nature of such an exploration in the context of this chapter involves understanding how Angela Carter has reenvisaged the dynamic of the Romantic sublime. We will see how this revisioning is only fully realised in her novels when characters become involved in a mutual, erotic love relationship.

Women's Subjectivity and the Grotesque

This process of refiguring the Romantic sublime is, in one sense, inherently ironic, as it is initiated from the position of the Other, in other words, from the position traditionally occupied by the sublime object as opposed to the Romantic subject. There is an inherent irony in the (female) 'Other' appropriating a traditionally male process of subject-formation, and using it to create a transformative subjectivity for women. Because the self-reflexivity of such a move virtually presupposes some kind of subjective agency for this 'Other', it again underlines the fact that the Other is only such because of some prior decree by a (male) 'subject-self'. With this ironic inversion of the Romantic sublime, women's subjectivity may be explored by a parodic use of the Romantic subject-object dynamic.

When Carter parodies this dynamic, the reader is presented with images of debasement, of the body and its reproductive functions, of hybridity, and of doubled or excessive identities. To aid in the interpretation of these images, we will utilise Bakhtin's notion of the grotesque, and determine

how it may be usefully related to the Romantic sublime. For the reader familiar with Julia Kristeva's ideas about the abject, it might seem strange to ignore certain similarities between the abject and these images of debasement, reproductive functions, a rejection of the M(other) or any other 'representative' of the feminine etc., but there are many reasons to prefer, for the moment, to utilise Bakhtin's notion of the grotesque as delineated in *Rabelais and His World.*[8]

The primary reason to avoid using the abject to describe these images has to do with the nature of the current critique, and the nature of the abject itself. The abject is invaluable in a critique which seeks to destabilise an already established subjectivity by asserting the abject in place of the object, but its use is limited in the present critique, which focuses upon an ironic reworking of subject-object relations, in order to establish an ironic subjectivity for the Other. In *Powers of Horror*[9] Kristeva uses the grotesque as a term to describe 'abject femininity', (Kristeva, 1982: 169) and for Kristeva the abject borders the sublime, so there are certainly points of similarity between her use of the grotesque, and how I use the idea of the grotesque in the present critique. In fact, Russo in *The Female Grotesque* and Meaney in *(Un)like Subjects* have both built on Kristeva's use of the abject in relation to the sublime, and Russo connects Kristeva's idea of the abject with her own idea of the female grotesque.

However, Kristeva's ideas about the abject may perhaps be useful in reading an earlier work by Carter, *Shadow Dance* (1965), hereafter referred to as *SD*, in which abjectification serves as a *barrier* to objectification. *SD* tells the story of Ghislaine, and her reappearance after being knifed and hideously scarred by the novel's anti-hero, Honeybuzzard, by whom she remains masochistically obsessed. We are told that she has had sex with and been rejected by, among others, Honeybuzzard and his business partner Morris, a failed artist who is obsessed with Ghislaine.

On the surface, *SD* might seem to simply victimise the character of Ghislaine,[10] but read through Kristeva's notion of the abject, that portrait of victimisation becomes highly problematised. In *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva defines the abject as, 'a boundary-subjectivity,' a place between subject and object, an 'ambiguity' and a 'border' often characterised by bodily fluids and excretions, corpses, 'the monstrous feminine' and (in particular) the engulfing maternal presence. (Kristeva, 1982: 141) A description of Ghislaine's mutilation recalls the context of abjection:

> The scar drew her whole face sideways and even in profile, with the hideous thing turned away, her face was horribly lop-sided, skin, features and all dragged away from the bone [...] Her face [...] might suddenly [...] leak gallons of blood and drown them all. (3)

and 'her voice gave the final, unnerving resemblance to a horror-movie woman to her [...] Bride of Frankenstein [...] vampire woman' (39). The scar literally convulses Ghislaine's beautiful features, contorting them into the 'hideous', and because the scar divides her face into one half which is 'like a bowl of blancmange a child has played with and not eaten' and half which is 'fresh and young and smooth', the scar itself marks a border between the dual aspects of her objectification; as the femme-enfant and the horror-movie woman.

It is as the embodiment of the latter that Ghislaine becomes a haunting figure in the novel, a figure of woman's objectification which, precisely in its dis-figuration from the ideal to the horrible, refuses to disappear, becomes 'real': it is no coincidence that Morris claims he is 'running away from the real woman'. At one point he confronts his inability to turn Ghislaine into

> the subject for a painting, a Francis Bacon horror painting of flesh as a disgusting symbol of the human condition; that way, she became somehow small enough for him to handle, she dwindled through the wrong end of the telescope of art. Yet he could [...] never execute; never paint the painting which would justify treating her as a thing and not a human being. (20)

It is precisely because of Ghislaine's abjection that Morris cannot turn her into the 'subject' for a painting; he cannot objectify her through representation. He finds himself unable at this point to aestheticise, to objectify and eroticise Ghislaine through the voyeuristic medium of art, and so he cannot escape the real woman, the real human being. Kristeva asks if 'the eroticization of abjection, and perhaps any abjection to the extent that it is already eroticized, is an attempt at stopping the hemorrhage: a threshold before death, a halt or a respite?' (Kristeva, 1982: 55) The fact that Morris cannot paint her, cannot come to terms with her, means that for Morris, the hemorrhage continues, the respite never comes. Even when he wishes to 'blot out her face in each pose' of the pornographic pictures Honeybuzzard has previously taken (in which Honeybuzzard is humorously disguised, while Ghislaine is bare-faced, and 'splayed' out in increasingly 'wicked' poses), he finds that instead, 'he was finely, carefully, striping each image of her with a long scar from eyebrow to navel' (17). Ironically, he can only turn Ghislaine's objectified image into an abjectified one.

By nature, the scar calls particular attention to the boundary between internal and external, a boundary that has been violated, and Ghislaine's scar threatens to burst open, further blurring the distinction between inside and outside. In fact, at one point, Ghislaine herself tears the scar open and it becomes infected; she does so in a fit of hysteria because she cannot locate Honeybuzzard, with whom she yearns to be reunited. This scenario is reminiscent of how Kristeva describes the abjected person him/herself, when threatened with separation from the source of abjection, i.e. 'To preserve himself from severance, he is ready for more--flow, discharge, hemorrhage' (Kristeva, 1982: 55). It is when Ghislaine has been 'discharged' from the hospital, in effect declared 'well', that she begins to 'discharge' both physically and mentally; her physical discharges and hemorrhages are reflective of her mental dis-integration. Her dis-figuration in the text marks her dis-association from the so-called

'normal' relations, the specifically patriarchal relations of subject and object, within which she has been sexually objectified. In her abjection, she finds a precarious space outside patriarchal discourse and representation, and in effect, her abjection is the excess that haunts Morris until he himself goes mad. Significantly, Gamble identifies Morris' dilemma as that of Bahktin's Romantic grotesque,[11] a version of the grotesque we will discuss further later in this chapter with regard to *NC*.

In contrast, Carter's later novels seem to play on the tension between grotesque objectification and sublime indeterminacy. Before we look at the role of the grotesque and its relation to the sublime in her work, however, it might be well to note that refiguring the Romantic sublime in the service of 'feminine difference' or 'otherness' does not simply involve inversions of a hierarchy. To understand the mechanics of this refiguration, we need to take another brief look at the Romantic sublime itself. Then we will be able to discuss why an ironic refiguration of the Romantic sublime might manifest itself in literature as a reversal or a doubling of identities, and a preponderance of grotesque imagery.[12]

A Closer Look at the Romantic Sublime

The Romantic sublime has been discussed before in the introduction, but it is worth reiterating and expanding upon the definition established. Thomas Weiskel's book, *The Romantic Sublime,* was a landmark study of the psychology and philosophy behind this process of transcendence and identity-formation.[13] He details the process of subject-formation in Romantic poetry (most specifically Wordsworth's) that results from the transcendent aspect of the sublime:

> The essential claim of the sublime is that man can, in feeling and in speech, transcend the human [...] Some notion of the beyond is necessary. (Weiskel, 1986: 3)

The Romantic sublime, then, is concerned with transcendence, whether this takes the rhetorical form of encounters with the unknown in Nature, or with some other form of (perceived) primal chaos. In transcending the human, the Romantic sublime does not necessarily reject human subjectivity or humane values, however, so much as reaffirm the subject's power to go beyond itself. Ideally, this can be taken as an empowering move; in going beyond what is 'human,' the subject can encounter that which is not yet determined as such, and thus attempt to create new and untarnished relationships with 'otherness'. Indeed, many contemporary perspectives on the sublime emphasise its importance in terms of how that indeterminacy and excess may facilitate ethical encounters with otherness;[14] likewise, in this chapter we are concerned with how ironising the Romantic sublime might give rise to indeterminacy rather than (sexual) objectification.

In the Romantic sublime, as we noted in the introduction, the representative process which involves the sublime is mostly narcissistic, concerned with the empowerment of the individual (male) subject. According to Weiskel, the artist and critic's concern with how sublime otherness affects the subject occurs in the eighteenth century, when 'speculation withdrew from the search for sublimity in the object and began to be centred in the emotions of the subject' (Weiskel, 1986: 14). At its worst, this subjective appropriation of the sublime can be seen to contribute to the formation of an 'imperial' self which 'colonises' and uses the Other as an object, a mere foil for the subject. At its best, perhaps, the subject would not appropriate or incorporate the Other as object, but enter into a negotiation with an(other), as opposed to 'the Other'. Feminist theory has tried to emphasise the importance of the latter, of a relational dynamic between self and an(other) who lies beyond the self; Mellor notes this entering into a relation with the sublime other as the 'positive sublime', and it is an element of what she terms 'feminine romanticism' (Mellor, 1993: 90).

Weiskel's Romantic sublime is a combination of what he identifies as the impetus behind the Kantian (or negative) sublime, and what he identifies as an egotistical (or positive) sublime in the work of Wordsworth. In the mode of the positive sublime, the subject enters into a relationship with the object-Other, a relationship which results in the expansion of the Romantic subject-ego. However, if carried to its 'logical conclusion', this expansion results in an obliteration of the subject, through its complete merging with the object. In the mode of the negative sublime, the subject turns away from imaginary transcendence to preserve the ego, away from the object of the Other, back toward human limitations and the symbolic order of the Father.[15]

In Weiskel's Romantic sublime, which he describes as 'oscillatory' (Weiskel, 1986: 44) between the negative and positive sublime, the relation between the poet and the symbolic father is an Oedipal one. (Similarly, in Bloom's version in *The Anxiety of Influence*, the poet suffers from an Oedipally-based anxiety of influence, making it necessary for him to 'kill' his poetic precursor.) Weiskel designates the sublime object somewhat sketchily as the primal (M)other, as does Patricia Yaeger more adamantly, following on from Weiskel.[16] We shall, to a certain extent, adopt this viewpoint in our analysis of *PNE* when we focus on Evelyn's negotiation of 'Mother' as a sublime other. According to Weiskel, by communing with the sublime (M)other, the poet attempts to overthrow an authority which is seen as oppositional to the poet's imagination. But where the positive sublime leaves off, the negative sublime begins; imaginative contemplation of the sublime (M)other, i.e. a chaos which is pre-linguistic, allows for the expansion of the poet's mind, but for the purpose of self-authorisation, the poet must ironically turn back to the Law of the Father: to the symbolic order of language.[17]

The predicament of Weiskel's Romantic sublime might be summarized as follows: the sublime

(M)other is necessary to the male Romantic subject, for her ability to stimulate the imagination, but to use language, the poet must turn away from the imaginative source of the (M)other. In this form, the Romantic sublime remains a solely male domain, a question of symbolic fathers and their poetic sons. This version of the sublime is by its nature very limited; in Weiskel's own words,

> we have long since been too ironic for the capacious gestures of the Romantic sublime [...] To please us, the sublime must now be abridged, reduced, and parodied as the grotesque, somehow hedged with irony to assure us we are not imaginative adolescents. (Weiskel, 1986: 6)

Weiskel's perception of the irony in question is one that addresses a lost faith in the imagination, a cynicism that is responsible for the sublime's transmutation into the grotesque.

I would suggest there is another kind of cynicism afoot which also calls for the ironisation (via the grotesque) of the Romantic sublime. Contemporary reworkings of the Romantic sublime must certainly consider the issue of gender roles and representations, specifically the problematic of the (M)other being used as an object. In 'Toward a Female Sublime,' Yaeger connects the work of contemporary French feminists with a version of the sublime which does take gender into account. She writes,

> The burden of French feminist writing is that women must create a new architectonics of empowerment--not through the old-fashioned sublime of domination, the vertical sublime which insists on aggrandizing the masculine self over others, but instead through a horizontal sublime that moves toward sovereignty or expenditure, that refuses an oedipal, phallic fight to the death with the father, but expands toward others, spreads itself out into multiplicity. (Yaeger, 1989: 191)

This horizontally moving sublime (which, like Kristeva, Yaeger associates with the pre-Oedipal and the Mother), is a useful contrast to the vertical hierarchy of the Romantic (Oedipal) sublime. Such a classification, however, ignores the complexities brought to bear by the inherently ironic usage of

the Romantic sublime. In an ironic mode, the Romantic sublime may still be consciously Oedipal, but parodied from the perspective of the (M)other. The question remains, what happens when those who have traditionally occupied the place of the Romantic Other attempt to invoke the Romantic sublime? Can women writers use the psychology of the Romantic sublime in an ironic form to transform its inherent objectification of the Other into an exploration of their own otherness? To phrase it another way, can women writers modify the dynamic of the Romantic sublime to emphasise the indeterminacy of otherness, rather than the identity of the (male) subject? Undoubtedly, when we consider the question of woman-as-Other, and acknowledge that the issue of 'otherness' has become a prime focus of gender and identity-based criticism, a refiguration of the Romantic sublime seems a key task to be explored.

Thoughts on the Grotesque: The Romantic Grotesque, the Grotesque of Romantic Irony, and the Difference Between the Grotesque and the Sublime

We have mentioned that when the Romantic sublime is ironised, there is a proliferation of grotesque imagery. We will be considering the term grotesque in relation to Bakhtin's usage of it in *Rabelais and His World*, but we must also consider the term in relation to contemporary material culture. We might first look at the 'negative' connotations of the word 'grotesque', and to what it refers to in a general sense. When women are considered as objects within culture, they are the focus of a grotesque overdetermination of what it is to be feminine, i.e. the wearing of make-up, the cultivation of a certain body-size and shape, etc. Even more grotesque is the notion that this overdetermination signifies normative femininity. In this sense, 'negative' plays on both the idea of an unpleasant consequence, and one that is associated with the traditional 'negative' term of woman,

especially to man's 'positive'.

This negative sense of the grotesque in Carter's work is transformed by what we might see as Bakhtin's more positive, regenerative usage of the grotesque, which we will explore in a moment. (Here, I do not mean 'positive' as a term to be associated with any gender.) If we are to understand how the negative and the positive usages of the grotesque interact, it will be helpful to summarise in brief the tradition of the grotesque, a summary in which we will also discuss how others have applied the term to Carter. In *Rabelais and His World,* Bakhtin outlines a history of the grotesque from medieval times through the Renaissance and Romantic periods. He delineates the function of the grotesque as being the creation of an alternative, unsanctioned tradition of regeneration via elements of carnival, reproductive functions, and bodily excess. The grotesque is transgressive, and signifies a lack of clear boundaries, especially of those between self and world, or self and an(other).

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, the grotesque becomes formalised, migrating from a celebration of folk culture to a consecration of 'inventive freedom,' or imagination. It is perhaps no coincidence that the notion of the Romantic sublime also has its advent at this time; the notion of inventive freedom or imagination, taken up by the Romantics, is related both to the sublime powers of the imaginative mind, and the fantastical constructions of the mind. And Victor Hugo viewed the (Romantic) grotesque as 'a means of contrasting the sublime. The two complete each other' (Bakhtin, 1984: 43). The Romantic grotesque, which Bakhtin also names the 'subjective grotesque', contributes to the formation of individual subjectivity; the individual negotiates a world of gothic terrors and overwhelming desires, and achieves subjectivity through a kind of hollow, ironic laughter. Within the Romantic grotesque, laughter loses its powers of regeneration and community, and carnivalesque masks conceal a vacuum of nothingness.

The disciples of Romantic Irony fare a bit better; Schlegel's grotesque enables 'the breaking up of the established world order [...] the "alternate succession of enthusiasm and irony"' (Bakhtin, 1984: 41). And both Jean-Paul and Schlegel identify the 'positive element of the grotesque, its last word, is conceived [...] as outside the laughter principle, as an escape from all that is finite and destroyed by humor, as a transfer to the spiritual sphere' (Bakhtin, 1984: 42). Gerald Gillespie sees the grotesque of Romantic Irony as a mode which was utilised by the artist to critique grotesque injustices, and also as a counter to what was then seen as rigid Enlightenment rationality.[18] The grotesque was an accepted, productive imaginative mode; its powerful excessiveness allowed by contrast for Romantic 'self-referential irony,' and thus in that sense for the creation of subjectivity. In this case, the grotesque functions similarly to the sublime, as a tool for ego-enhancement. In another sense, the grotesque was an alternative to the 'fraudulence of the bourgeois world picture,' and might 'penetrate directly to primordial reality' (Gillespie, 1988: 335) When we refer back to the language of criticism used to describe the Romantic sublime, we may take this primordial reality as an image for the (M)other, with all the (unfortunate, though perhaps unconscious) Oedipal overtones of Gillespie's word choice, 'penetrate'. Thus, Gillespie intimates, in Romantic Irony the grotesque is a way of reaching toward the sublime. Here, we see the dual potential of the grotesque to both critique an existing social order of power, and lead the way towards a sublime not yet 'colonised' by the subject. What is emphasised once again, however, is the necessity for a gender-based critique of this potential, as the 'primordial reality' in question is again, however subtly, gendered female.

In Carter's work, we will see how the sublime hinted at by the grotesque of Romantic Irony is not the negative sublime described by Weiskel, that leads back to the symbolic order of the Father,

nor necessarily a primordial (maternal) reality. Instead, it is a sublime which opens the subject outwards, towards a new, as yet indeterminate relation with an(other), as opposed to the (M)other. This, then, would be one purpose of rewriting the Romantic sublime, to explode the myth of the (M)other as primal wellspring, and create the possibility of intersubjectivity; intersubjectivity based upon a relation with an(other) whose identity is indeterminate, rather than essentialised by myths of origin.

An example of the grotesque leading towards an indeterminate sublime in Carter's own criticism can be found in 'The Wound in the Face',[19] one of her essays on fashion and cosmetics in *Nothing Sacred* (1982), hereafter referred to as *NS*. She comments on the habit of some women in the sixties who wore black lipstick and red eye-shadow, a grotesque turnabout of the usual, accepted look. She declares it a 'monstrous' look, Dada-esque in character, as it 'instantly converted the most beautiful women into outrageous grotesques' (99). This movement highlights the subversive use of cosmetics to free women from the consumerised conception of ideal feminine beauty. On the other hand, Carter perceives that cosmetics can be used as a mask, and we might view this in the Bakhtinian sense, as part of a freeing notion of carnival. Masks may also be used to escape from restrictive identities, to create new, as yet unknown identities. To pass oneself off as 'another' is a movement towards the sublime, the potentially freeing unknown that lies beyond the self. As Carter writes in 'Notes For a Theory of Sixties Style' in *NS*,[20]

> Disguise entails duplicity. One passes oneself off as another, who may or may not exist [...] It does [...] give a relaxation from one's own personality and the discovery of maybe unsuspected new selves. (86-87)

The 'negative' grotesque of make-up is transformed into the 'positive' grotesque of transformative mask. These 'unsuspected new selves' herald a sublime element within the exaggerated, parodic form

of the grotesque.

We will return to masks and cosmetics when we discuss Carter's novels, but it must be emphasised that Carter's essays reveal an intimate sense of the interplay between the 'negative' grotesque, the 'positive' grotesque, and the indeterminacy of the sublime. That interplay finds its material base within notions of a produced femininity in culture; it is this produced femininity which must be addressed if the negative grotesque is to give way to the positive grotesque, and in turn make way for an(other) who is sublime in the sense of being indeterminate and non-objectified.

To emphasise again that Carter is more than aware of how the grotesque becomes the sublime, we need only turn to a comment she makes about the buildings of Bradford in 'Industry as Artwork',[21] buildings for which she feels

> the same attraction/repulsion the late eighteenth-century intellectual experienced at the spectacle of the Horrid. Just as the uneasy aesthetic of the Horrid modulated into a positive pleasure-reaction to the same spectacle redefined as the Picturesque and thence into that expansion of the sensibility involved in the discovery of the idea of the Sublime, so the Horrid [...] Is now well on the way to becoming a new type of the Beautiful, although we have not yet found it a fitting name. (64)

Many of her critics have connected Carter's work with the grotesque, but as previously noted, only Mary Russo connects Carter's use of the grotesque with her attendant focus on the sublime. For Carter, when we can find beautiful what is regarded by normative culture as grotesque, we have the expansion of the sensibility toward the 'Sublime'. Black lipstick and red eye-shadow, the buildings of Bradford, both are instances of how we might look with new eyes at what a normative culture might term grotesque, in a negative sense. By moving toward the sublime, that for which we have not yet found a fitting (and in another sense, restrictive) name, it is possible to subvert the cultural ideal of the beautiful, a move which has especial significance for women. The vision required to make

this move is highly ironic, but nonetheless may be used to create new relations within a commodity culture that seeks to normalise in order to exploit gender identities.

Having looked at the tradition of the grotesque, what follows is a brief summary of the work of two critics who address the grotesque in Carter's work. My intention is both to show how each views the grotesque in relation to Carter, and to detail how my own position differs or advances upon their perspectives. Kari E. Lokke connects Carter with Bakhtin and Kayser,[22] and declares that Carter works through 'grotesque overstatement and excess' and a 'powerful irony and parody of traditional plot' (Lokke, 1988: 8). Lokke notes Carter's ironic perspective; however, she then allies her with the Renaissance grotesque rather than the Romantic grotesque, and Jungian archetypes rather than Freudian imagery. From Carter's own writings and commentary, we know that she feels strong affinities with Blake, and not Jung, but Freud,[23] and more with a certain late eighteenth, early nineteenth century Zeitgeist, than with a Renaissance perspective. By ignoring these facts, and ignoring the implication of Carter's parodic irony as that which is, as we shall see, preoccupied with Romantic subjectivity, Lokke fails to connect Carter with the grotesque of Romantic Irony. By allying her with the Renaissance grotesque, Lokke is unable to conceive of Carter's grotesque in relation to the eighteenth century notion of the sublime. Viewing Carter's work in relation to the grotesque of Romantic Irony, however, allows us to see how, ironically, the grotesque becomes sublime, and how this process is related to the issue of women's subjectivity. Additionally, such a position remains faithful to Carter's own affinities with Blake and the late eighteenth century, and allows us to see connections between Freudian-based criticism on the Romantic sublime and Romantic subjectivity (such as Weiskel's or Bloom's), and how Carter's own affinities with Freud's ideas are expressed in her novels.

Furthermore, though Lokke perceives Carter as transforming myth within her work, she overlooks perhaps the most significant myth permeating Carter's earlier works: the myth of the Fall. In an interview with John Haffenden, Carter identifies this myth as the basis for *The Magic Toyshop* (1967), aligning herself with Milton's idea of the fortunate Fall, though she admits in an interview with John Haffenden,[24] 'I got it wrong, of course [...] I took the Fortunate Fall as meaning that it was a good thing to get out of that place' (Haffenden, 1985: 80). Likewise, *PNE* possesses obvious connections to the myth of the Fall within a futuristic context, that nonetheless has its roots in Romanticism. Felski comments in *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics* that

> The temporal structure underlying Romanticism is shaped by the myth of the Fall [...] A nostalgic vision of an authentic subjectivity opposed to and subversive of the norms and values of modern social existence is strongly in evidence in the novel of awakening, which typically contains a number of explicitly Romantic motifs. (Felski, 1989: 145)

The myth of the Fall in Carter's work emphasises the significance of connecting her fiction to Romanticism, and Romanticism's preoccupation with the formation or nostalgic recovery of a subversive subjectivity.

Carter, however, explodes this idealism and nostalgia via her irony, an irony which utilises the grotesque to create sublime, subversive possibilities and relations for and between individuals. As David Simpson points out in 'Commentary: Updating the Sublime,' after Milton, 'the romantic (and subsequent) interest in the sublime' involved 'a dramatic and even melodramatic imaging of the self as [...] transgressive' (Simpson, 1987: 245-258). In Carter's work, the ironised Romantic sublime is illustrated by the female characters who cultivate and embrace a melodramatically grotesque 'imaging of the self,' in order to transgress or explode oppressive societal norms of femininity. To return to Lokke, her view of Carter's grotesque as Renaissance rather than Romantic must be

regarded in the present study as a failure to realise the mechanics of Romantic subjectivity at work in Carter's fiction.

Rory P. B. Turner's analysis of the grotesque within *Nights At the Circus* is closer to my own perspective.[25] Turner, a folklorist, contends that the novel's main concern is to show how the main character, bird-woman Fevvers, makes the journey from symbol to subject. She argues that Fevvers

> transcends the symbols that men create to contain her in the book. But this transcendence itself creates a symbol, a symbol spilling over, a grotesque symbol. (Turner, 1987: 46)

Here it is Fevvers who appropriates the process of transcendence, instead of the male subject; but although Turner uses the language of transcendence, and later refers to 'the liminal state' of identity, curiously, she never mentions the sublime. Instead, we have Fevvers as a product of self-created excess, and she thus becomes a subversive, grotesque symbol, akin, we might speculate, to the women Carter praises for wearing red eye-shadow and black lipstick.

Turner maintains that a normative symbol is commodifiable, exchangeable, but that a grotesque symbol resists such a dynamic because of its excessiveness, its uncontainability. (This notion of excess touches upon a complementary facet of the sublime; where the grotesque is excessively formed, the sublime represents an excess that is formless, indeterminate.) Fevvers makes the journey from grotesque symbol to subject when she enters into a love-relation with Walser, who has also become grotesque through various rites of passage. This love-relation acts as an opening onto the sublime, or what Turner sees as an instance of Victor Turner's *communitas*, 'an unmediated relationship between historical, idiosyncratic, concrete individuals' (Turner, 1987: 58). This idea of an unmediated relationship differs from my own perspective significantly; I will later argue that love itself acts as a mediating force within intersubjectivity.

The gist of Turner's reading can be summarised by the following passage:

> What Carter is saying is that subjectivity is not going to be healthy if the symbolic positing of self isn't in the frame of human relationships but takes place as a dehumanized economic exchange. (Turner, 1987: 55)

For Turner, the notion of relation between subjects acts as a counter to symbolic economic exchange, which dehumanises the (female) subject and assigns to her an exchangeable, symbolic value. Turner identifies a hope present in Carter's work that a love relation between individuals can prevent the objectification of an(other). We shall take up this problematic later, in terms of how Carter's conceptualisation of love-relations between individuals changes from novel to novel. We will see that the notion of the sublime becomes crucial in understanding how love might function to subvert the objectification of an(other). In Turner's paraphrase of Fevvers, 'to be borne witness to and to remain an individual, that is the problem' (Turner, 1987: 58). Or, we might say, to become an object in another's gaze, and not succumb to objectification, that is the problem; in fact, one wonders if Bluebeard's bride in Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* falls in love with a blind piano-tuner precisely to avoid such objectification (in which case we might pause to reflect on the old maxim, 'Love Is Blind').

Perhaps the most intriguing point Turner makes about the grotesque involves not Fevvers, but the circus clowns, whom she sees as an instance of Bakhtin's Romantic grotesque. This is the grotesque robbed of its regenerative function, reduced to mockery, a mask of laughter which covers a vacuum, a nothingness. Turner contrasts the clowns' nihilist grotesquery with Fevvers grotesque nature, which enables the transformation from symbol to subject. Turner, as a folklorist, places Fevvers regenerative transformation within the frame of a ritual, a rite of passage involving the transcendence of a limit, the killing of an old identity to create a new one, to subsequently take one's

place as a subject within the community. I would instead prefer to read Fevvers' ability to recover this regenerative factor as ironically turning the grotesque toward the sublime, in order to turn toward an(other) member of a community.

It may be helpful to further clarify the distinctions and uses of both the sublime and the grotesque, as they seem to be, as Victor Hugo implies, two sides of the same coin. In one sense, the grotesque is excessive and highly visible, an exaggerated construct. In a subversive context, it can stand in defiance as a critique of conventional representations of an object, *and in that manner approach the 'sublime' in the sense of going beyond a normative limit*. Indeed, in *The Female Grotesque*, Russo draws from Thomas Weiskel's work on the Romantic sublime, and his turn towards the grotesque, asking if the grotesque is not 'just one more version [...] of the sublime,' (Russo, 1994: 32) or vice versa, in the sense that they are both modes of challenging finitude. This strategy of seeing the grotesque as a version of the sublime may be a useful one from the perspective of the objectified woman-as-Other, i.e. one way to subvert normative constraints placed upon 'woman' is by an ironic revelry in the grotesque, exaggerating images of normative femininity until they become so ridiculous that they then transgress and challenge the norm.

Insofar as the Romantic sublime represents an indeterminate chaos, an engulfment of ego, an excess, its counterpart in terms of 'form' or 'object' is the grotesque, or the horrible. The grotesque is on the one hand the excessively or extravagantly formed, and on the other, the 'unclean' indeterminacy of the hybrid, the 'impure' expressed in form. Later, we shall see that Carter plays on both these forms of the grotesque, to create metaphors which are both iconoclastic of normative identity, and expressive of an 'identity' which is indeterminate and/or hybrid, in the sense of being part 'subject', part 'otherness'. The grotesque can in this manner be used to subvert the objectification of

a 'feminine' identity, and to generate the possibility of the sublime, of indeterminate otherness, and a relation to that otherness. Disengaged from the objectification of the (M)other, the sublime in Carter's work regains its potential for regenerative excess and indeterminacy.

This regenerative excess would exist in opposition to both the idea of woman-as-excess, such as leads to the formation of the male artist's subjectivity in the Romantic sublime; and the idea of woman-as-excessively-constructed, which operates in culture to control images of femininity. A rewriting (re-riting and re-righting) of the Romantic sublime might, as one of its functions, disturb both these paradigms. In Carter's fiction, we will examine how indeterminacy, and the further possibility of self-determination, is recovered; the grotesque is used to transform the excess of gender overdetermination into an indeterminate excess that plays itself out in relations between subjects.

Carter, the Sublime and Romanticism: Intersections

Having set the theoretical groundwork for the questions at hand, I would like to expand further upon Carter's admitted commitment to Romanticism and the exploration of otherness, in contrast to Weiskel's. Weiskel's declaration that 'the sublime must now' be 'somehow hedged with irony to assure us we are not imaginative adolescents' (Weiskel, 1978: 6) oddly echoes one by Carter in her introduction to Walter de la Mare's *Memoirs of a Midget*,[26] in which she identifies in a positive sense, 'the romantic idea of the artist as perennial stranger, as scapegoat and outcast [...] perpetual adolescent' (vii). The two views are ironic foils for each other. Weiskel sees the contemporary Romantic sublime as being reduced to the grotesque, and made ironic by those who wish to avoid looking undignified in the face of modern criticism. Carter sees Romanticism and grotesquery as a powerful tools for subversion, and the spirit of 'perpetual adolescence' as the

Romantic artist's self-conscious alienation, a self-consciousness highlighted ironically by the Romantic artist's status as 'outcast' and 'stranger'. Carter herself is quick, however, to mock the extreme expression of this alienation, and its potential solipsism; in 'Flesh and the Mirror' (from *Fireworks* (1974)) the narrator relates, 'I thought I was the most romantic spectacle imaginable as I wandered weeping down the alleys' (66) and she creates her lover 'solely in relation to [herself], like a work of romantic art' (67).

In her reading of de la Mare's novel, we can see that Carter's view of the heroine Miss M. mirrors the process we have been discussing heretofore, the ironic turning of a Romantic sublime object into a subject, via the grotesque. *Memoirs of a Midget*, which Carter deems full of 'romantic melancholy' is the story of the anonymous Miss M., a midget whom Carter identifies as 'the physical manifestation of an enormous difference' (xv). Within the theoretical framework I have outlined above, we might view Miss M. as a grotesque objectification of the sublime. Miss M. is described by the character Fanny as being 'deviant', freakish and grotesque. However, Mr. Anon., another character and also a midget, loves Miss M. and watches over her covertly all the time, as if he were 'the eye of God'. The two constructions of Miss M. that result are pointed out by Carter; they exemplify the tension between a 'difference' that has been objectified into something grotesque, and a 'difference' that exists as an indeterminate relation between subjects. Miss M. is viewed and conceived of as a grotesque object by Fanny, and as sublimely indeterminate by fellow midget Mr. Anon., who never tries to construct Miss M.'s identity.

It is significant that Carter finds de la Mare's novel about marginalised midgets intriguing. In her interview with Ann Snitow, Carter admits,

> it is very difficult writing about a whole culture when one is in some sense in exile

> from it [...] Women are marginalized. I sort of cope with this by deciding the margin is more important than the page. (Snitow, 1989: 14)

This statement touches upon the reason I would prefer to view Carter's work in terms of a feminist rewriting of the Romantic sublime, with the marginalised sublime object regaining her vitality and voice. And there is a visionary, apocalyptic quality to Carter's own fiction which, in my opinion, aligns her even more strongly with Romanticism. On her own style, she comments:

> It has to do with romanticism and rationality [...] I was thinking about Blake, the long tradition of English radicalism. You can date it back to Milton [...] It's all to do with dreamers. They fall asleep on the hillside and they have this visionary dream and they wake up again [...] Why is it that in Britain socialism has always been romantic and soft-edged and visionary? It's always been the dreamers--Blake and William Morris--dreamers of impossible dreams of beauty and wholeness. [Long pause] And in France, *it's Lenin* [...] In Britain, and I expect also in America, socialism is [...] to do with [...] Christianity [...] Something which will descend in a cloud. Whereas in Europe socialism is rationality--anticlerical. (Snitow, 1989: 16-17)

Carter's style is certainly not 'soft-edged'; she is an urgent Romantic speaking with the rational impetus of a Marx or a Lenin. Pointedly, in the same interview, Carter admits her work is somewhat an attempt to synthesise Freud and Marx, associating Freud with Wordsworth and Romanticism, and Marx with rationality.[27] We might view Carter as a Romantic visionary concerned with the 'impossible dreams of beauty and wholeness' from the viewpoint of the Other who is well aware of the material conditions to which she has been subjected.

The Passion of New Eve

The Passion of New Eve is the story of Evelyn, born an Englishman, who, at the hands of Mother, is castrated and surgically transformed into a woman, New Eve. The main part of the novel consists of Eve's search for a female and feminine identity amongst the ruins of an apocalyptic

America. The setting of the novel is itself Romantic in the sense that it seeks for something 'new' amidst the ruins of apocalypse. The reader is presented with various versions of femininity in the mode of the grotesque and the doubled identity. Through these images of grotesquery and doubling, the notion of Woman-as-Other is placed in a highly ironic context which is both parodic and subversive of the process of the Romantic sublime. To see how this irony is played out in the novel, it is perhaps best to discuss the nature of the four main 'women' characters, and their relation to what we might call feminine and masculine modes of being. I use quotations because two of the women are originally men, and Mother as we shall see, is initially more a symbol than a human being. The four women we will focus our attention on, then, are Leilah/Lilith, Eve/Evelyn, Tristessa de St. Ange, and Mother. We will briefly discuss each of their characters, before turning to the various relationships between Eve and Zero, Eve and Tristessa, and Eve and Mother.

Tristessa

We are introduced to the extravagant, 'emblematic despair' of the film-star Tristessa through the eyes of Evelyn, who tells us, 'There had been a baleful vogue for romanticism in the late forties', and that Tristessa is, 'the very type of Romantic dissolution' (7). Evelyn admits that he 'only loved [Tristessa] because she was not of this world [...] fleshy synthesis of the dream, both dreamed and dreamer' (8, 9). Tristessa's description fits that of the sublime Romantic Other, and her synthesis could be seen as a kind of doubling effect; she is both dreamed (Other) and the dreamer (the subject-self). This doubling produces an irony, in that it suggests a 'subject-position' for the Other, who becomes the subject of her own Romantic imagination.

This doubling effect is further complicated when the reader discovers that Tristessa, the

exaggerated and thus grotesque embodiment of femininity, is actually a man, a fact that causes Eve to silently exclaim, '(What a satire Tristessa had been upon romanticism!)' (144). Tristessa is an example of the sublime, transformed in its ironic mode into the grotesque, 'every kitsch excess of the mode of femininity'. (71) Eve reflects, 'Mother would say [Tristessa] had become a woman because he had abhorred his most female part--that is, his instrument of mediation between himself and the other' (128). The paradox of the phallus being a man's most female part is not such a paradox when we reflect on the irony that what is self and what is other becomes more confused when flesh meets flesh. In other words, in a heterosexual context, the phallus is that male part which gains closest proximity to internal female space, and is in that sense the instrument of mediation between the male self and the female 'Other'.

Tristessa desires to become entirely Other, to embrace 'Passivity [...] Inaction [...] I was seduced by the notion of a woman's being, which is negativity. Passivity, the absence of being. To be everything and nothing' (137). Paradoxically, in an 'ironic joke' (144), Tristessa finds her initial being as a subject by becoming the Other. Evelyn observes,

> If a woman is indeed beautiful only in so far as she incarnates most completely the secret aspirations of man, no wonder Tristessa had been able to become the most beautiful woman in the world [...] You had turned yourself into an object as lucid as the objects you made from glass; and this object was, itself, an idea [...] Tristessa had no function in this world except as an idea of himself; no ontological status, only an iconographic one. (129)

Tristessa seems to establish her identity by embracing the idea and the iconography of the perfect woman, the extravagantly formed, completely male-defined Other. The irony, of course, is that Tristessa is actually a man, and thus we are led to view him/her as a highly ironic figure of the Other. When Tristessa meets Eve, further interesting potential for subversion occurs, and we will discuss,

further on, how the relationship between the two leads through a notion of the Other, to mutual otherness.

Leilah/Lilith

In the 'Gothic darkness' of New York, Evelyn finds the glamorous and chaotic prostitute Leilah, whose high heels transform her 'into a strange, bird-like creature, plumed with furs, not a flying thing, nor a running thing [...] some in-between thing' who 'seemed to manufacture about herself an inviolable space' (20-21). Evelyn views Leilah as being aligned with darkness and chaos, a powerful, hybrid, grotesque wild creature, but also, conversely, as a weak victim of the social pecking order. To Evelyn, she is both inviolable and 'violate-able', as he takes every chance he has to exploit her within their relationship. He is at once mystified and contemptuous of her, a duality which evokes the transition between a contemplation of the Other as otherness, and the Other as object. Leilah embodies this oscillation; 'her self seemed to come and go in her body, fretful, wilful, she a visitor in her own flesh' (27). Leilah's struggle for self-hood can be seen as a tension between maintaining the (inviolate) otherness of the Other, and resisting the objectification (or violation) of the Other.

Reminiscent of Tristessa's description of what is 'female,' Evelyn describes 'the exquisite negative of [Leilah's] sex' (27). Phrases such as this uttered by Evelyn, the unrepentant exploiter of women who represents the supposed 'positive' male term, underline the fact that defining sexuality by opposition enables such an exploitation. But for those being constructed as victims, Carter suggests, there exist specific avenues of protest. Evelyn muses

[Leilah] seemed to me a born victim and, if she submitted to the beatings and the

> degradations with a curious, ironic laugh that no longer tinkled--for I'd beaten the wind-bells out of her, I'd done *that* much--then isn't irony the victim's only weapon? (28)

Leilah seems a victim, but in the end we see she is not; she is Mother's daughter, a powerful revolutionary whom we meet again toward the end of the novel. But insofar as Evelyn constructs her as a victim, she must resort to 'the victim's only weapon,' irony. Here again, we see irony as a tool which functions to empower the female 'Other'.

This 'victim's' irony is further revealed as a potential source of power, in a scene where Evelyn watches Leilah contemplate herself putting on make-up in the mirror:

> [Leilah] did not grow beautiful by a simple process of becoming [...] She became absorbed in the contemplation of the figure in the mirror but she did not seem to me to apprehend the person in the mirror as, in any degree, herself. The reflected Leilah had a concrete form and, although this form was perfectly tangible, we all knew, all three of us in the room, it was another Leilah. Leilah invoked this formal other [...] she brought into being a Leilah who lived only in the not-world of the mirror and then became her own reflection [...] My Leilah was now wholly the other one [...] the mirror bestowed a grace upon her, now she was her own mistress. (28-29)

The form in the mirror is Other to Leilah, separate from her victimised self, but a grotesque form into which she gradually transforms herself, ironically attaining self-possession as she enters the realm of the image, the imaginary. Leilah's is not 'a simple process of becoming,' but one complicated by gender relations dictated by the self-Other dynamic. The female 'object' is constructed as a negative, who lives 'only in the not-world of the mirror'.

The device of the mirror-image recalls a comment by Weiskel, who refers to Lacan's 'mirror stage'. Weiskel declares

> Ultimately the locus of identity is the body--or, more correctly, the imaginary derivative of the body, the 'body image'. The French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan has reformulated the traditional problem of subjectivity in terms of what he calls the 'mirror stage'. The self is originally constituted as an Other in the moment of

> identifying with an image which appears to exist 'outside', typically its own reflection, but always a unified Gestalt. (Weiskel, 1986: 150)

Lacan's philosophy highlights the fact that *an imaginary Other* is already within us, waiting to be projected onto the mirror. We might differentiate from Lacan's mirror-stage, however, when discussing women's subjectivity. Lacan identifies this process of identification with a mirror-image as a unified Gestalt, but the tension implicit in the formation of women's subjectivity does not necessarily allow for a Gestalt. Carter offers us Leilah's 'cracked mirror [which] jaggedly reciprocated her bisected reflection and that of [Evelyn's] watching self' (30). The cracked mirror does not allow for a Gestalt, for a whole appropriation of the Other into the self. The reflection is bisected, doubled, as is Evelyn's when he looks upon the image of the Other. This bisection might reflect the tension of self and Other within every individual, but if the Other cannot be fully envisaged in the mirror, neither can it be fully appropriated.

The appropriations that do go on in the novel between Evelyn and Leilah involve Evelyn's view of this Other in the mirror as the product of his fantasies, rather than Leilah's. This appropriation, however, is subverted by the narrative itself. Evelyn reports that

> [Leilah] seemed to abandon her self in the mirror, to abandon her self to the mirror, and allowed herself to function only as a fiction of the erotic dream into which the mirror cast me [...] So, together, we entered the same reverie, the self-created, self-perpetuating, solipsistic world of the woman watching herself being watched in a mirror that seemed to have split apart under the strain of supporting her world. (30)

While at first glance this passage might seem to confirm a rather exploitative viewpoint, we might read it as an escape from exploitation. Leilah abandons her self both 'in' and 'to' the mirror; this doubled movement must be read for its textual subtleties. If Leilah abandons her self *in* the mirror, she abandons the Other who is about to be appropriated, and thus is not exploited, at least, not as

Leilah *per se*. If Leilah abandons her self *to* the mirror, she gives in to the construct of the Other, but the text suggests that this construct can then be shrugged off again, as it is only a 'fiction', Evelyn's erotic dream. That fiction is self-created by Evelyn, and serves to perpetuate his self, but the mirror itself has 'split apart' under the pressure of Leilah's fragmented identity. The split in her identity might be seen as the split between being 'one's own Other', and somebody else's Other, the latter having the status of an object. The condition of being someone else's Other would, theoretically, not allow for a *unified* Gestalt recognition of the Other-which-becomes-self. Without the unified Gestalt, there occurs a dislocation between self and the reflected Other-which-becomes-self. This dislocation, rather than being viewed as a disadvantage, ironically, can be viewed as empowering; it 'locates' woman's identity beyond any appropriation of the Other by the (male) subject.

In fact, in yet another move of doubled identity, we find that Leilah is actually Lilith, and like Adam's first wife, she is a powerful and subversive figure, set in opposition to a dominant patriarchal history. Leilah might have been constructed as a victim, her subjectivity appropriated by male images, but Lilith is Mother's daughter, a completely different figure than the victim Evelyn has imagined. As Eve, Evelyn acknowledges that his constructions of Leilah are merely his projections. Evelyn is only able to realise this, however, after Mother has had her way with him, and turned him into a her.

Mother

With her tiers of breasts, Carter's Mother is reminiscent of Mother Nature in Hogarth's *Boys Peeping at Nature* (1730), which depicts three cherub-like boys drawing the eight-breasted female figure of Nature which stands before them.[28] Such representations highlight the fecundity of the female form, and the excessive femininity attributed to Nature by its male observers; the inscription

found above the picture *Boys Peeping at Nature*, for example, reads 'Antiquam exquirite Matrem' (seek out your ancient mother).[29] Nature represents the eternal feminine, and masculine imagination shapes her in order to create an artistic object. Before the eighteenth century, however, feminine imagination was regarded as more powerful than masculine imagination, and the mother's imagination in particular was viewed as a source of potential perversion/subversion (i.e., a pregnant woman's fright upon seeing a hideous object might cause her baby to be born deformed). The mother's role in the imaginative process was later displaced in Romanticism by a concept of imagination that emphasised both masculine control and a final, elevated product of male creativity. As Marie-Hélène Huet writes, 'In theories of monstrosity, the maternal element repressed the legitimate father. The maternal imagination erased the legitimate father's image from his offspring and thus created a monster [...] Romantic aesthetic theory sketched out a model genealogy for the work of art and the procreative role of the artist [...] Imagination was reclaimed as a masculine attribute' (Huet, 1993: 8).[30] Carter's Mother has strong ties to Romanticism (she lives in Beulah, undoubtedly a reference to Blake's Beulah[31]), and she may be viewed as attempting to recover the creative role usurped by the Romantic artist, by turning Romanticism on its head; the ironic treatment of the Romantic sublime in *PNE* inverts traditional identities and imaginative powers.

In Carter's (in)version, Mother's nature is archetypally feminine, but she uses it to create a symbol as rigid in its way as the phallic image of the Father. Mother is a grotesque version of motherhood:

> Mother has made herself into an incarnated deity; she has quite transformed her flesh, she has undergone a painful metamorphosis of the entire body and become the abstraction of a natural principle. (49)

In the Romantic sublime, the (M)other represents the natural principle of birth and origin that the poet must encounter and turn away from if he is to establish his male identity. Here, Mother embodies this abstraction of actual motherhood with a vengeance, becoming a primal, 'natural principle' intent on creating a new female order.

However, in a reversal of roles, it is the now female New Eve who must participate in the identity-forming process of an ironised Romantic sublime, as opposed to the male artist. This ironised version still posits Mother as that which must be encountered, but instead of denying Mother, New Eve must work through the grotesque in the form of Mother's unnatural 'natural' order, in order to find her own identity. To do so, New Eve must become 'the subject of one of [Mother's extraordinary experiments]' (49). New Eve becomes the paradoxical 'subject' of one of Mother's experiments to create the beyond-the-ordinary, i.e. a woman (an Other) who possesses a sense of subjectivity, of identity.

There is another compelling reason for associating this process of identity-formation in Carter with an ironised Romantic sublime; Mother's credo involves the reinterpretation of the Oedipal myth, a myth from which the Romantic sublime draws its dynamic. In Beulah, Mother's city, Evelyn hears female voices chanting:

> 'Proposition one: time is a man, space is a woman.
> Proposition two: time is a killer.
> Proposition three: kill time and live forever.
> [...] Oedipus wanted to live backwards. He had a sensible desire to murder his father, who dragged him from the womb in complicity with historicity. His father wanted to send little Oedipus forward on a phallic projectory (onwards and upwards!); his father taught him to live in the future, which isn't living at all, and to turn his back on the timeless eternity of interiority.
> [...] Journey back, journey backwards to the source!' (53)

Instead of the Oedipal resolution of the Romantic sublime, where the poet turns away from the (M)other and 'the timeless eternity of interiority', the voices advocate another kind of solution; the Oedipus figure merges with his mother's body, and journeys back to his origin. In *PNE*, the Oedipus figure is Evelyn, who journeys back to the source partly by physically becoming a woman, and as we shall see later, partly by exploring the cultural and experiential meaning of 'woman'. Although she does not connect Carter with Romanticism or the sublime, Linda Ruth Williams does highlight the reworking of this Oedipal dynamic in Carter's work, seeing Carter's 'alternative family romances' (Williams, 1995: 124) as an attempt to reimagine the mother-daughter relationship, as well as the subjectivities of mothers and daughters.[32]

Carter's work, however, is clearly connected to the Romantic version of the Oedipal drama, as her intertextuality with Blake demonstrates. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* and *Jerusalem*,[33] Blake's Beulah may be a place where opposites exist in harmony, 'a place where Contrarieties are equally True' (30:1 and 48:14 respectively), and in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, a place of 'happy Female joy,' (33:19) but Carter's Beulah is dominated by a man-hating Mother, with a separatist feminist agenda. Carter satirises the Romantic unity of Beulah, that place in *Jerusalem* of 'Maternal Love' (48:18) and sanctuary, by ironising the Romantic objectification of the M(other).

The sublime aspect of Carter's Mother might be viewed as a violent parody of the old matriarchal figure in Blake's *Jerusalem*, who is embraced by the daughters of Beulah, and described as 'an Aged pensive Woman/[...] The sublime shade/[...] Occupied in labours/Of sublime mercy' (*Jerusalem* 48: 28-29, 40-41). In *Jerusalem* this figure is able to control time and space, which is precisely what Mother wishes to do in order to create an eternal female space. Instead of 'sublime

mercy,' Mother embodies a sublime violence, castrating Evelyn and declaring war on men in order to usher in an era of female dominance.

Rather than an androgyny, the passage outlining Mother's revisionist Oedipal philosophy sets up an adversarial opposition between men and women, to be overcome by a merging with the (M)other. However, we must view Mother's project as possessing an ironic edge, as relatively soon after *PNE* was published, Carter published *SW*, in which she declares that mother goddesses are just as silly a notion as father gods. More importantly, the passage raises the notion of returning to origins in order to oppose history, and sets the interior space of the female/feminine body against time and history. Within this passage, Carter highlights how constructions of origin and history have been used to construct gender, particularly in the Romantic paradigm. But she also highlights the potentially subversive uses of the notions of 'origin' and the female/feminine body. Certainly, in their ongoing dialogue with Freudian concepts, critics such as Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva emphasise the importance of both origin and the female/feminine body.[34] However, for Carter, a declaration of war in the name of 'woman' or 'the feminine' alone is as futile as the already existing structure of patriarchy,[35] though a notion of the body as the potential site for subversion, and a questioning of ideas about origin are both matters which are crucial to Carter's work throughout.

In Carter's work, we might view this scenario of journeying back to the source of the primal Mother, to a time before the subject existed in history, as a call to return to a state of sublime indeterminacy. Yaeger identifies what she terms 'the pre-Oedipal or feminine sublime' as an element of the female sublime. This reflects a pre-Oedipal sense of merging with the mother-figure, a constant nearness to the Other, and a resultant 'intersubjective bliss'. However, Carter's version of this is far more violent, an ironic satire designed to show up the limitations of such extremes of

overcompensation; Mother is grotesque and merciless in her means of de-creation. In theory, Yaeger might regard Mother's strategy as an example of expanding 'the typology of the female sublime [...] To include women writers' celebrations of a violence originating in women'. (204) I myself prefer to view it as an example in Carter's work whereby the grotesque (the overdetermined Mother-figure) attempts to reclaim the sublime, and in the case of Mother, fails to do so because there is no sense of relation, only of domination.

The effect of that domination, had it been successful, would have been the creation of the ultimate solipsism; Mother wishes to impregnate New Eve with Evelyn's sperm, Evelyn as the father/male element having already been 'eliminated'. The result can be seen as a containment of desire no less severe than that propagated by 'male-centred' strategies. We can contrast Mother's attempt to subsume the male into the female with the hermaphroditic being Eve and Tristessa represent during their love-making (see below), marginally better for consisting of two separate individuals, but still problematic in its attempt to merge difference or otherness within the same.

Demystified by her failure, Mother becomes mother, a blind old woman drinking vodka by the sea. To Eve, she declares, 'We are on the beach of elsewhere, Eva' (190). As mother, she has reached an indeterminate state of being, and a place beyond what is known ('elsewhere'), and she could herself be 'either man or woman'. Freed from her existence as a symbol, mother may again become the source of sublime experience. Instead of an Oedipal dynamic, however, we shall see that when Eve finally confronts a primal creative force (Mother Earth), the dynamic is one of an encounter and negotiation with an otherness both within and without the self.

Evelyn/Eve

We come finally to the character of Evelyn/Eve, who is educated through various encounters and relations with other characters. It is perhaps best to examine each of these relations progressively; the ones we are most concerned with are, Evelyn/Leilah, Eve/Zero, Eve/Tristessa, Eve/mother, and Eve/Eve. Eve begins life as Evelyn, a spoiled Englishman seeking adventure in the apocalyptic cesspool of a future New York City. Evelyn plays Romantic subject to Leilah's object; for him, she is the chaotic, excessive principle of 'dissolution' he appropriates, constructs and destroys to create his own sense of self. In refusing to love Leilah, Evelyn declares, 'I saved myself from that most brutal of all assaults, the siege of the other' (34). Though he flees the Other, Evelyn feels drawn to the otherness of the desert; he declares, 'the primordial light, unexhausted by eyes, would purify me' (38). His longing for the desert as a place 'unexhausted by eyes' is a longing for an unclaimed sublime object, one he has not already constructed and destroyed. It is no coincidence that he wishes to find there, 'that most elusive of all chimeras, myself,' (38) to use the sublime yet again as a means of constructing his male ego. What he finds there, a self which is 'a perfect stranger' to him, can be seen ultimately as an image of the subject's relation to its own otherness.

After Evelyn is transformed by Mother into New Eve, she is captured by the self-proclaimed poet Zero, who has gathered a harem of women to him whom he keeps suppressed by (along with other violent methods) forbidding them to use language. Rendering these women captive (bounded) and speechless (pre-Symbolic) can be seen as Zero's effort to contain and appropriate the sublime Other in order to establish his identity as poet and man. In an inversion of the Romantic dynamic, Zero can no longer create himself at the expense of the Other; instead of being a poet-hero, he is a zero, a nothing. He negates and cannot achieve potency from what he has enslaved, though Eve observes that the wives maintain his existence as a tyrant by their belief in him as the prophet for a

new age.

Eve does not believe in Zero's authority, but she is forced to enter into a sexual relation with him, by which she becomes aware of her lack of identity; she experiences being objectified by Zero's gaze in two ways. She relates

> when he mounted me with his single eye blazing like the mouth of an automatic [...] I felt myself to be, not myself but he; and the experience of this crucial lack of self, which always brought with it a shock of introspection, forced me to know myself as a former violator at the moment of my own violation. (101-102)

Violator and violated simultaneously, the object of an identity-threatening gaze and a former objectifier of others him/herself, Eve experiences an identification with the ego of a subject who can only objectify, or negate, identity. It is when she experiences this duality that New Eve begins to become Eve, no longer a physical, and more importantly, no longer a psychological, female 'virgin'.

But, in Mother's words, 'Woman has been the antithesis in the dialectic of creation quite long enough' (67). *PNE* is an ironic working through of the proposition of man as subject, a 'positive' representation of order, and woman as object, a 'negative' representation of chaos; the novel is a grotesque parody of these tenets. These oppositions of self and Other most begin to blur within the relation between Eve and Tristessa.

With Eve and Tristessa, Carter conceives of a situation whereby a man who is turned into a woman masquerades as the groom marrying a bride who is actually a man who impersonated the perfect essence of woman all his life. This parody of a sacred marriage of romance between hero and heroine is used to wreak havoc with ideas of gender, and of woman as antithesis. In her mind, Eve tells Tristessa

> I entered the realm of negation when I married you with my own wedding ring. You and I, who inhabited false shapes, who appeared to one another doubly masked, like an ultimate mystification, were unknown even to ourselves. Circumstances had forced us both out of the selves into which we had been born and now we were no longer human--the false universals of myth transformed us, now we cast longer shadows than a man does, we were beings composed of echoes. These echoes doom us to love. (136)

Under the guise of double masks, of grotesquery, Eve and Tristessa become an otherness to themselves and to each other; together, they are 'doomed' to enter into a love-relation, as sublime beings, 'no longer human,' and 'unknown' to themselves.

In *PNE*, Carter seems to advocate a return to the sublime through love, but also through a sense of returning to an image of the primal origin. This is not necessarily a return to a solely female or feminine principle, but an expression of the hope of beginning again afresh. To arrive at the sublime, Carter chooses the route of the grotesque, in the sense that Bakhtin highlights, of the body and its reproductive force. Eve notes, 'Flesh is a function of enchantment. It uncreates the world' (148). By going through the body, in order to confront the otherness within as well as without, Eve's observation suggests we might work toward a new beginning, a new set of gender relations. Eve waxes eloquent about Tristessa's reaction to her body as a physical representation of origin, revelling in

> the primordial marine smell, as if we carry within us the ocean where, at the dawn of time, we were all born [...] the smell of the first sea, that covered everything, the waters of beginning. (148)

With the meeting of flesh, Tristessa and Eve can commence the process of beginning anew. They begin the exorcism of objectification by expressing themselves as subjects and objects past and present, playing out abstract and ephemeral ideas of gender identity in and upon the physical body:

> we peopled this immemorial loneliness with all we had been, or might be, or had dreamed of being, or had thought we were--every modulation of the selves we now projected upon each other's flesh, selves--aspects of being, ideas--that seemed, during our embraces, to be the very essence of our selves [...] As if, out of these fathomless kisses and our interpenetrating, undifferentiated sex, we had made the great Platonic hermaphrodite together, the whole and perfect being to which he, with an absurd and touching heroism, had, in his own single self, aspired; we brought into being the being who stops time in the self-created eternity of lovers. (148)

This exorcism is not without problems, however; the being Eve and Tristessa create is 'undifferentiated', so it seems as if the idea of difference is here annihilated by the amorous conjoining of the two.

There is also the problem of the constructing gaze to overcome; Tristessa says of her personae, 'she entered me through her eyes,' (151) recalling the notion of 'being borne witness to' discussed earlier. Tristessa then tells Eve she must not look at him, ostensibly to avoid appropriating him with a constructing gaze. The desire to create a hermaphrodite, to turn towards the body, is in part an attempt to avoid constructing the other as an object of the gaze. It is as if Carter wants to express the hope that love and its fleshly expression can somehow prevent this from happening.

Carter seems aware that the notion of setting love against history is problematic and somewhat didactically optimistic. Her ongoing irony is, in part, a reaction to this awareness. What does one do with an undifferentiated being, when the notion of difference is precisely what is at stake? As we have mentioned before, this undifferentiated being is only marginally better than Mother's hopes for creating an Evelyn/Eve female clone. Even Lilith must comfort Eve by telling her the baby she has conceived will have two fathers and two mothers, a multiplicity gained through irony.

Carter escapes the difficulty of this situation partly with Tristessa's death and with Eve's musings about the indeterminate qualities of masculinity and femininity:

> Masculine and feminine are correlatives which involve one another. I am sure of that--the quality and its negation are locked in necessity. But what the nature of masculine and the nature of feminine might be, whether they involve male and female [...] that I do not know. (149-150)

Though it is by now an accepted idea, Eve's musing highlights the fact that 'masculine' and 'feminine' may have nothing to do with 'male' and 'female'; the latter are biological designations, while the former are gender designations based upon cultural norms. Carter's attempt to ground the revolutionary quality of love in material gender-relations is important, but significantly, she goes on to voice a need for new and sublime beginnings even closer to home, in the female body itself.

This concern with celebrating a fresh beginning for the female body can also be viewed as making the grotesque sublime. French feminist criticism has taken the general route of creating a mode of the feminine that has to do with reclaiming the otherness of the female body. (This emphasis on the body is one reason why Kristeva, for instance, was interested enough in Bakhtin to use his notion of the grotesque.[36]) If, as Bakhtin tells us, the body and its reproductive functions are traditionally grotesque, we can now declare in an ironic reversal, that for women such an exploration of the body and images of birth and rebirth are an expression of the search for the sublime. Yaeger notes in 'Toward a Female Sublime',

> Although Irigaray does not say so explicitly, her project, and that of Cixous, is to re-invent the sublime as a feminine mode--to invent, for women, a vocabulary of ecstasy and empowerment, a new way of reading feminine experience. (Yaeger, 1989: 192)

Yaeger mentions a pre-Oedipal merging with the (M)other as part of her Romantic female sublime, adding that this leads to ecstasy and empowerment in feminine experience. In *PNE*, Carter sends Eve on a journey through Mother Earth's womb-like body, so that Eve may confront and learn from her origins. While this is not Yaeger's version of a permanent merger with the M(other), it is a temporary

merger that enables Eve to discover the ostensible roots of her own identity.

If we look at Cixous' re-definition of bisexuality, we might understand the death of Tristessa, and the subsequent journey of Evelyn/Eve, as a progression. In *The Newly Born Woman*[37] Cixous identifies two kinds of bisexuality, one which is

> a fantasy of complete being, which replaces the fear of castration and veils sexual difference [...] Hermaphrodite, less bisexual than asexual, not made up of two genders but of two halves. Hence a fantasy of unity [...] To this bisexuality that melts together and effaces [...] I oppose the *other bisexuality*, the one with which every subject [...] sets up his or her erotic universe. Bisexuality -- that is to say the location within oneself of the presence of both sexes [...] The non-exclusion of difference. (Cixous, 1994: 41)

Eve and Tristessa together veer dangerously close to the first version, a totalising bisexuality, while Evelyn/Eve embodies the second version, which acts to preserve difference. And it is precisely to set up her own 'erotic universe' that Eve needs to encounter and mitigate the symbols that mark her transition from masculinity into femininity.

Earlier we discussed how mirrors could, in one respect, be used to objectify and hence rigidify gender identity. Within the first cave she enters, Eve encounters a mirror 'broken, cracked right across many times so it reflected nothing, was a bewilderment of splinters and I could not see myself nor any portion of myself in it' (181). Though this has been interpreted by Ricarda Schmidt as the creation of new, as yet unidentified symbols of femininity,[38] I would say that symbols is not entirely the correct terminology to use. The point, in fact, is that symbols need to be disposed of, and replaced by a fluidity or even a deferral of image-making that would allow for the continued existence of a sense of otherness. This fluidity of image is conveyed in *PNE* not only by the splinters of mirror, but by the metaphor of the prehistoric archaeopteryx, the hybrid lizard-bird, from whose 'angelic aspect spring the whole family tree of feathered, flying things and from its reptilian or satanic side the

saurians, creepy crawlers' (184). The text suggests that, just as this 'miraculous, seminal, intermediate' hybridity of image existed once, it can exist again. The grotesque 'satanic' snake-like creature of knowledge will be joined in harmony with the 'angelic' aspects of flight and the sublime. Here, inside (M)other earth, and inside the female body, is where a true, Blakean 'Marriage of Heaven and Hell' can take place. Body and spirit, or self and otherness, may yet co-exist in harmony. Though hybrids are traditionally aligned with the grotesque, ironically this image of a hybrid, transformative self-in-transit, which may not yet exist for women in culture, might well be seen as sublime, i.e. at present beyond material realisation or conception.

To go beyond conception, it seems, one must return to a time before conception, in this case a womb-like place where time runs backward, as Eve inches her way 'towards the beginning and the end of time' (185). Eve knows 'that Mother is a figure of speech and has retired to a cave beyond consciousness' (184), and Eve must now enable her own rebirth. One is tempted to think of Carter's cave in terms of Irigaray's speculum, a (con)cave which represents the pregnant womb.[39] In effect, Eve journeys through the feminine body, and after a confrontation with various primal elements and images, she is expelled onto the beach. This is no coincidence; besides being next to the sea, the beach is made of sand, the origin of glass, glass possessing certain mirroring qualities, as David Punter has noted.[40] A potentially objectifying, negating means of reflection has thus been dissolved back into its primal element, and effectively decreated, so that Eve must start anew. Eve is left with her memories of Tristessa, and sets sail with her unborn child, the primal sea of birth both within and without her. This negotiation of images from a kind of maternal prehistory, coupled with a new beginning in motherhood, sets Eve free from what Lucy Armitt has noted as the body of the redundant mother,[41] to pursue her own destiny; in effect, to give birth to herself.

The last two lines of the novel reveal Eve's release into an external difference, into the indeterminacy which characterises the sublime. Eve declares, 'The vengeance of the sex is love. Ocean, ocean, mother of mysteries, bear me to the place of birth' (191). Barbara Freeman notes that historically, the most common metaphor for the sublime is the ocean, which metaphorically evokes a sense of the primal other.[42] And it is no coincidence that love is mentioned here in connection with the ocean; 'the seige of the other,' the seige of an otherness whose presence demands to be admitted, opens the self to the sublime, to an oceanic multiplication and excess. Being borne to the place of birth is an ironic doubling of language by Carter; it implies a continuous sense of birth-in-progress, the other within the self encountering the otherness of the world. The image of pregnancy can also be read as a splitting and multiplying of the subject, a redoubling of the body, at once an excess of body and the coexistence of the self and an(other).

To expand upon these fecund images, it would be remiss (with Carter's Freudian bias) to ignore the ties between the sublime primal (M)other and the unconscious as the supposed source of repressed origin. As we have noted, in the Romantic paradigm, the point of recovering this sense of origin by an act of imagination is to create an artistic work, a textual extension of the self. Indeed, Eve describes herself on her journey in part as being 'pressed as between pages of a gigantic book [...] of silence' (180) which has been closed upon her; part of her journey consists of reopening that book, and giving voice to herself. We cannot help but note the continuing connection between the sublime and the sublimation of the imagination that results in a work of fiction. In 'Women's Time', Julia Kristeva notes the preponderance of women's desire for affirmation to manifest itself in 'artistic and, in particular, literary creation' (Kristeva, 1991: 456-457).[43] I would suggest that this phenomenon is one example, but by no means the only, of women accessing and 'recovering' the

sublime.

When Lilith offers to return Evelyn's genitals, Eve refuses, signifying a concrete rejection of Evelyn's former patriarchal mindset. Just as the Romantic view that Adam and Eve's was a fortunate Fall which released them from the direct authority of the Father, Eve's rejection of male genitalia intimates that the change from male to female has, for her, been another kind of fortunate Fall. It has allowed her to recover the sublime powers of an otherness within and without.

The Idea of Love as Sublime

With *The Passion of New Eve*, we have begun to look at the question of love as regards the sublime. In talking about love in her fiction, it might be regarded as odd that we are not going to look at the one novel by her entitled exactly that. *Love* was published in 1971, and Carter later partially refuted it, adding a post-script reworking the fates of her various characters. *Love* is written in what could be described as a realist mode, though its construction is often subtle, and Carter experiments with modes of perspective which might be viewed as more surreal in nature, as Sue Roe notes.[44] *Love* is more about victimisations in the name of love, 'the dreary paraphernalia of romanticism' (7), rather than the transformative possibilities of love, and cannot really be discussed in terms of the Romantic sublime, although Carter refers to the novel as a rewriting of Benjamin Constant's Romantic novel, *Adolphe*, and as we noted in Chapter One, Aidan Day discusses how *Love* may be compared to a novel of sensibility.

While we will not discuss *Love*, we find an example of the importance of love in the last paragraph of *SW*, in which Carter implies that the grotesque nature of pornography might yet become sublime if it were to admit the possibility of love. After analysing the Marquis de Sade's pornographic

texts, Carter writes,

> In his diabolic solitude, only the possibility of love could awake the libertine to perfect, immaculate terror. It is in this holy terror of love that we find, in both men and women themselves, the source of all opposition to the emancipation of women. (150)

Love is set against the solitude of the subject who is closed to otherness, and so cannot ever participate in a sublime sense of relation to an(other). This resistance to a love-relation is seen as a resistance to emancipating women, and more generally to emancipating otherness from how it has been appropriated. In other words, this resistance to love is a resistance to a mutual sharing of power with or giving up power to an(other).

In the postscript to *SW*, entitled 'Red Emma Replies To The Madman Of Charenton,' (a section from Emma Goldman's *The Tragedy of Woman's Emancipation*), we again find a defence of love.

> the most vital right is the right to love and be loved [...] A true conception of the relation of the sexes [...] Knows of but one great thing: to give of one's self boundlessly, in order to find one's self richer, deeper, better. That alone can fill the emptiness, and transform the tragedy of woman's emancipation into joy, limitless joy. (151)

Goldman argues that external, material facets of emancipation are only one part of sexual equality; the 'inner regeneration' that women and men need to experience for there to be a complete emancipation of women has to do with an acceptance and openness toward the idea and actuality of loving an(other).[45] This involves a sense of boundlessness and 'limitless joy' which is exactly, I would argue, the basis for the 'holy terror of love' about which Carter writes. A bounded self is synonymous with a finitude and autonomy of self. A self that gives boundlessly, as if it had no bounds, touches upon a sense of complete otherness and infinitude. In theology, this infinitude exists

as the ultimate holy Other, i.e. God. In secular terms, we may view love as having the effect of God without the religious mission, i.e. we find ourselves within a sublime relation and a contemplation of otherness. We encounter otherness and are changed by it, and love is terrifying because when the self is subjected to a sense of boundlessness, there is no guarantee that self will not be obliterated.

The sense of holy terror at being subjected to the infinitude of the Father becomes, with Romanticism, more of a holy terror at being subjected to the infinitude of the (M)other. It is no wonder Carter so frequently alludes to Milton (and sides provisionally with Blake) in interviews and essays: as a feminist writer, she is all too aware of how women have been subjected to the infinitude of the Father, Milton's icon of absolute authority against whom the Romantics often set themselves; on the other hand, it is only marginally better for women to struggle with ideas of 'maternal chaos'. At least in the case of the latter, women may reappropriate 'chaos' in the name of indeterminacy and excess; in the name of a non-objectifiable sublime.

As we have noted elsewhere, Salman Rushdie comments that literature fills a certain god-shaped hole; I would argue that for Carter, one way her fiction functions as a rewriting of Romantic ideas is to create and reopen a window-hole to an otherness which is not gender-specific. Further, I would argue that it is love that enables that reopening, and acts as a mediating principle between subjects. In the opening of that 'window', the borders of the subject-self are challenged, and the subject enters into a relation with the sublime, because it reaffirms itself in the context of a love-relation, a boundless giving between self and an(other).

In her essay in *NS* entitled 'Love in a Cold Climate: Some Problems of Passion, Protestant Culture and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*',[46] Carter expounds upon the revolutionary potential of romantic love or passion within British culture. She identifies repressive elements of British

bourgeois and working-class culture which

> are based on a denial of the power of language to communicate feeling [...] Based on the same set of existential premises, on a sense of self with rigidly defined boundaries, on a fear of the expression of emotion as, perhaps, eroding those boundaries. (167)

When we view this in light of our earlier discussion of a bounded self as opposed to an unbounded self, we see that Carter views the expression of feeling and emotion as truly revolutionary for the subject.

In 'Love in a Cold Climate: Some Problems of Passion, Protestant Culture and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*', Carter argues for what she terms 'ecstasy,' which leads toward 'enlightenment'. She laments,

> Passion is the metaphysics of ecstasy but we are a pragmatic nation. We invented empiricism. But although I am a good pragmatist, too, and perfectly happy to ascribe the state of ecstasy to an explosion of body chemistry, that does not change the nature of the feeling. You can explain why ecstasy happens but you cannot explain it away. (168)

Passion, then, is that which escapes rationalism, that which is excessive and transgresses the boundaries between self and an(other). Carter talks of the difference between the language of sacred or passionate love, and profane love; the sacred is expressed as the spiritual and mystical, while the profane is expressed through references to the physical. Between the two lies 'the diabolical abyss of transcendance (sic) without mysticism', in British culture a repression of sexual language and emotion into a base (hence diabolical) vulgarity of image and language. We might understand how this relates to the subject-object dynamic as follows: transcendence is a movement characterised by a desire for the sublime Other. Transcendence without mysticism is what would allow the subject to appropriate or to 'know' the other, as an object. Transcendence with mysticism would be that which allowed for the 'expression' or excess of passion, that element of sexual being which defies

explanation or containment, and which, as such, would prevent the objectifying sensation of 'knowing' the other. Passion also implies the impossibility of 'knowing' one's self, as the instant of passion is 'defined' by the self giving itself up to a feeling of passion in excess of the self. Thus, instead of something like Wordsworth's 'emotion recollected in tranquility,' which gives the self an opportunity for reconstitution in thought and poetic rhetoric, Carter's emphasis on the transcendent lies in the moment when the self loses itself to a sublime otherness, and thus becomes sublime itself.

Carter holds that the mysticism of sacred love or passion breaks down the opposition of self and an(other), it is

> passion as a litany of exemplary suffering, illumination, transcendance (sic), as an access of desire, not neccesarily gratified desire, in which opposites...are mixed. (169-170)

Passionate love is both this suffering,[47] and what mixes up self and an(other), and also what is 'not necessarily gratified desire'; it both creates confusion and escapes in the confusion, as it were. In this instance, we might view Carter's notion of passionate love as a kind of *jouissance*, uncontainable sexual joy.

Carter speaks of a collision between sacred and profane love which results in an 'explosion of transcendance (sic) the surrealists called "*amour fou*" (Carter, 1992: 170). (She is not, however, happy with the translation 'mad love', as it implies a negative value judgement.) *Amour fou* recalls Breton's autobiographical writing, *L'amour fou*,[48] and indeed, given Carter's desire to reconcile Marx and Freud, it is highly significant that Breton's *L'Amour Fou* seeks 'to reconcile [...] Engels and Freud' (Cohen, 1989: 106).[49] However, I would like to make a connection with another text here, to suggest that Carter's '*amour fou*', as a kind of 'madness' is another word for difference, in the sense of otherness. Shoshana Felman writes specifically about women and 'madness,' but I would

say her words held significance for both genders, when we consider *amour fou*:

> The woman is "madness" to the extent that she is Other, *different* from man. But "madness" is the "absence of womanhood" to the extent that "womanhood" is what precisely resembles the Masculine universal equivalent, in the polar division of sexual roles. If so, the woman is "madness" since the woman is difference; but "madness" is "non-woman" since madness is the *lack of resemblance*. What the narcissistic economy of the Masculine universal equivalent tries to eliminate, under the label "madness," is nothing other than *feminine difference*. (Felman, 1991: 15-16)

'Madness' in women, then, might also be feminine difference, unrecognisable in relation to the male subject, and therefore (somewhat reminiscent of Foucault's views on what constitutes madness and normality in *Madness and Civilization* and *Discipline and Punish*[50]) labeled as madness within the dominant paradigm of patriarchy. Perhaps then, what is perceived as *amour fou*, a mad love whose meaning cannot be fully translated, is the desire to let difference, what is sublime, other to us and beyond us, invade us, even ravish us.

In the traditional dynamic of the Romantic sublime which leads to the construction of the (male) poet's subjectivity, the sublime is effectively rejected and objectified. As an example of Romantic literature that allows for sublime passion to successfully invade the self, Carter cites *Wuthering Heights*. Of Cathy and Heathcliff's mad love, Carter writes,

> Their's is a pure passion, pure transgression, an eroticism so violent it does not need to name itself [...] It is the high, romantic vision of passion which triumphs over death. (178, 179)

Although in practice this vision is probably so transgressive as to be fatal (one thinks of the self-annihilating abandon of Bataille's 'The Practice of Joy Before Death'[51]), the idea of mutual passion as both nameless and transgressive, as something so excessive that it survives death itself, is the expression of a hope; that an unnameable and uncontainable difference can somehow find expression, if not in language, then in emotion, and in the haptic moments that occur between individuals. It is

a hope that a sublime otherness, a difference that exists beyond the subject, will prove so powerful as to overwhelm the individual subject, to lead the subject towards the sublime, into transgression. We can view the notion of transgression as an attempt to 'admit' difference, both 'to let it inside the self' and to concede before, confess to and acknowledge otherness. To transgress would mean 'surrendering' to the seige of difference or otherness, the *trans* in transgress reflecting a movement toward and an opening up to otherness. We might term *amour fou* 'a surrender to difference or otherness' (at its most transgressive -- and fatal -- in *Wuthering Heights)*.

To return to how the idea of love as a sublime force manifests in Carter's fiction, we will continue with our readings of the novels. Though it may seem backtracking, as *IDMDH* was published in 1972, five years before *PNE,* I would like to look at the novel in the context of Carter's own acknowledged battle between 'Romanticism' and 'Rationalism'. I will suggest one of the conclusions the novel comes to is that the idea of love is beyond either paradigm, that love is itself sublime, and thus may be used to disturb both a Romanticism that tries to appropriate otherness and the Rationalism that tries to explain otherness away.

There are several components to the novel that should perhaps be outlined at the start, pawns in the battle between 'romantic' and 'rational' impulses. Desiderio, whose name literally means 'the desired one,' is of Indian extraction, though he is an agent for the ultra-rational Minister. He is therefore placed in an ironic position, of being the Other who speaks for that which tries to explain otherness away, or deny the possibility of otherness, imagination, possibility, etc. Desiderio is the ironic Other, who masquerades as a rationalist subject, and the novel is partially about his coming into awareness, through his encounters with love, of this irony. The Minister is a 'true' rational subject, who operates within a sterilised, completely contained realm, until Dr. Hoffman threatens to destroy

that existence. Hoffman, whose name is quite likely an allusion to the Romantic author E.T.A. Hoffmann[52] (he is referred to in the novel as having a 'Teutonic heritage; he had built himself a Wagnerian castle like a romantic memory' (196) is a terrorist in the name of desire, opposed to the Minister's control-strategies of rationality and the containment of images. Albertina, Hoffman's daughter, is elusive and protean, ultimately unknowable and uncontainable, and we can view her as a figure for the sublime Other whose 'admittance' through love marks the novel's commitment to the transgressive potential of love. Polarised characters play out their drama of imagination-politics, with 'the rational' attempting to contain the excess of images generated by the imagination and unconscious desires, and 'the romantic' trying to free the world into a less rigid reality-principle, a fluid, image-proliferating chaos.

Within this framework, we can understand why the Minister sends the Determination Police around the city to break all the mirrors:

> Since mirrors offer alternatives, the mirrors had all turned into fissures or crannies in the hitherto hard-edged world of here and now and through these fissures came slithering sideways all manner of amorphous spooks. (12)

Mirrors, though capable of objectification, can also be used to create indeterminacy and alternatives; as we have noted earlier with regard to the mirrors in *PNE*, they locate the self itself as being elsewhere, as an otherness, and therefore in a sense beyond appropriation, beyond definition or determination. The snake-like 'amorphous spooks' belie the indeterminacy of a self governed by imagination; the imagination and Hoffman's projections of desire are transgressive disruptions of the totalitarian authority of rationalism. However, Hoffman's desire-manipulation leads to an empiricism of objectification, and this is the lesson Desiderio learns through sacrificing the object of his desire,

and finally his Beloved, Albertina.

Desiderio concludes the introduction to his 'autobiography' by speaking of his lost love, Albertina, and admitting, 'My desire can never be objectified and who should know better than I? For it was I who killed her' (14). When we look at the formation of subjectivity as relying on the objectification of the desired other, it is literally the subject 'I' that 'kills' the desired other through objectification. In the novel, Desiderio enacts this abstract proposition, by murdering Albertina. He remembers,

> We wrestled on her father's flaccid corpse for possession of the knife as passionately as if for the possession of each other [...] I think I killed her to stop her killing me. I think that was the case. I am almost sure it was the case. Almost certain. (216-217)

At this point in the story, the reader has been exposed to the mechanical rationalism of Dr. Hoffman's desire machines, and Desiderio has ruined the Doctor's scheme to explode the Minister's Rationalism with an excess of desire. Thus the Doctor's corpse is flaccid, and with Hoffman's connection to Romanticism, we might be tempted to read this as the impotence of a male-centred Romanticism which seeks to create by containing and objectifying desire. Desiderio and Albertina, each other's desired Other, are left to wrestle for the phallic knife, for ultimate control, after Desiderio has killed the oppressive father-figure. If Desiderio and Albertina could gain possession of each other, like the fictional Cathy and Heathcliff before them, they might transcend their dilemma. Desiderio, however, convinces himself that Albertina is a threat to his life, and so he kills her. We are meant to realise, from his hesitation and uncertainty, that this self-persuasion is merely a rationalisation, the same kind in fact, as we find operable in the Romantic sublime; the sublime Other is perceived as threatening because of its engulfment of the ego, and so must be contained by a reassertion of ego.

Albertina, however, is the ghost of otherness who haunts Desiderio's stable, rational sense of self. She is 'the Beloved,' Desiderio's sublime other.[53] The last two lines of the novel are, 'I close my eyes. Unbidden, she comes' (221). Albertina becomes that which cannot be summoned or fully contemplated by the gaze; she is that which must be remembered and grieved for, that which presents itself to memory as a haunting. As such, her otherness invades Desiderio's autobiography, and so the self-made map of his life is penetrated by the presence of an(other). This haunting is Albertina's revenge for her murder, and a mark of Desiderio's frustrated desire, as he wishes to see Albertina again, but cannot. One is reminded of Carter's later phrase, 'The vengeance of the sex is love,' as Albertina's unbidden 'absent presence' as the Beloved is both her revenge upon Desiderio and a sign of love's power.

Rather than a means by which the characters achieve a relation with the sublime and open themselves to the possibility of a love-relation, the grotesque in this novel appears much more gruesome than it does in the later novels; at this point the presence of the grotesque only points towards the absence of a love relation or any negotiation of sublime otherness. As we have noted, Carter aligns transcendence with *amour fou*, a sublime love. Thus it is significant that the rationalist Desiderio says there is nothing of the transcendental in his 'scabbed husk,' and further we are told that since the Minister 'rejected the transcendental, he had clipped his own wings' (28).

Among the grotesque figures whose allegiances lie with desire and imagination, we have the 'The Erotic Traveller,' the Count who is so solipsistically in touch with himself as an objectification of desire that he negates whatever he touches. He claims, '"I am my own antithesis"' (135). Because in his grotesque excess of solipsism he completely contains his own objectified otherness, he acts as a negating force in life, unable to give anything of himself to others. His failure to access

the sublime is marked by the choice of what he condemns: 'The death-defying double somersault of love' (124). In his state of self-containment, the Count cannot bear the thought of a freeing mutual ('double') love, a love which erodes the established boundaries between self and an(other), and is thus 'death-defying' in that sense. This mutuality is significantly lacking throughout the novel.

Another example of the grotesque unredeemed by the sublime can be found in the brothel called the House of Anonymity. Whereas what is anonymous, without identity, is usually aligned with the sublime, the House of Anonymity holds only grotesque images. Desiderio describes the resident whores, who are kept in cages:

> Each was as circumscribed as a figure in rhetoric and you could not imagine they had names, for they had been reduced by the rigorous discipline of their vocation to the undifferentiated essence of the idea of the female. This ideational femaleness took amazingly different shapes though its nature was not that of Woman; when I examined them more closely, I saw that none of them were any longer, or might never have been, woman. All, without exception, passed beyond or did not enter the realm of simple humanity. They were sinister, abominable, inverted mutations, part clockwork, part vegetable and part brute. (132)

As we have noted, the rhetoric of the Romantic sublime distorts the figure of the Other through an abstraction of the 'female'; Carter's figures evoke this distortion in their 'undifferentiated essence of the idea of the female'. These images of women as inhuman figures, robbed of any identity except for that which gives rise to perverted rhetorical ideas and figures of femaleness, have little to do with actual women. Instead, they reflect the image of the terrifying sublime as objectified by male 'rhetoric' and represented as the grotesque, or horrible, and again, we might perceive how some of Carter's work could be usefully read in conjunction with Kristeva's notion of the abject, the 'monstrous feminine'. The mutilated, bestial bodies of these 'women' do not belong to the category of Bakhtin's regenerative grotesque; they represent the patriarchal construction of 'the essence' of

'the idea of the female' as repulsive.

IDMDH may be seen to a certain extent as proleptic of *PNE*. The former presents the flawed nature of Dr. Hoffman's Romantic, male version of desire and imagination as that which generates a grotesque excess simply to appropriate it and situate it as Rationalism's Other. Carter shows us that desire of this sort also operates by a kind of Rationalism, a mechanical analysis and recreation of the 'desire-effect' which emanates from the subject, and creates an object. *PNE*, on the other hand, attempts to explore variants of a sublime relation which would destabilise traditional subject-object relations. Both novels explore what Desiderio terms 'metaphysical chess,' the relation between self and Other, subject and object; *IDMDH* explores the nature of these terms in the context of an analysis of desire, while *PNE* focuses more upon how these notions affect constructions of gender.[54] Both novels illustrate Carter's project to rework Romanticism, and her growing awareness that the use of the overdetermined, i.e. the grotesque, must be balanced by a commitment to the indeterminate, the sublime.

If there are any doubts as to the Romanticism of *IDMDH*, one need only pick out phrases such as Desiderio's, 'Under all my indifferences, I was an exceedingly romantic young man,' (41) or 'The night sighed beneath the languorous weight of its own romanticism' (55). And it is via this Romantic vein that one can draw similarities between Dr. Hoffman and New Eve's Mother. Both Dr. Hoffman and Mother attempt to disrupt historical time, and to reappropriate the sublime to do battle against an opposing force, be it Rationalism or the patriarchy. Dr. Hoffman appropriates the sublime released by an excess of desire for the sexual object, while Mother occupies a more ironic position, as a parody of the essence of the Romantic sublime object itself. Insofar as Hoffman's park is 'framed by the female orifice in the first machine of all,' (196) Hoffman's version of desire can be connected

of all,' (196) Hoffman's version of desire can be connected to the Mother, in a sense 'the first machine,' or the origin. In other words, Mother acts as the source-point from which desire originates. According to the Freudian (and eerily Marcuse-like) Hoffman, desire resides in the unconscious, and to revolutionise the world, it must be freed from the unconscious and allowed to 'emanate' into and onto an object of desire in the material world. New Eve's Mother, as we have seen, wants to explode the Oedipal desire repressed in the unconscious, the desire that prevents the subject from desiring and merging with the sublime M(other).

A Freudian theory of the unconscious must be acknowledged in both novels (Marcuse's theories about the transformation of the reality principle in *Eros and Civilization* spring to mind[55]). The unconscious is presented as the site of repressed origin, i.e. a repressed desire for the mother and the sublime, transgressive otherness she represents, particularly in the Romantic paradigm. While the return of the repressed is seen as transgressive, we can see from Albertina and Tristessa's effect upon Desiderio and New Eve respectively, that desire becomes most transgressive, most radical for the subject, when an(other) from without disturbs the boundaries of the self. I will argue that the *relationality of desire* between self and an(other) is qualitatively different from the phenomenon of the subject-self's *desire as focused in and on an object-other*.

With the models of Dr. Hoffman and Mother, Carter indicates that any attempt to impress desire into the service of objectification or counter-objectification is doomed to failure. What is less clear, but nevertheless vital to our understanding of Carter's work, is the difference she posits between love and desire. In fact, Hoffman's fatal mistake is to confuse love with desire. Desiderio, with hindsight, tells us, 'Love is the synthesis of dream and actuality; love is the only matrix of the unprecedented' (202). He views love as part 'dream,' i.e. partly within the unconscious, in a sense

part imagination before imagination is used to objectify the world. The other part of love he refers to, 'actuality,' we can view as an actuating process, a creation of 'unprecedented' newness and beginnings, one might even say of birth. For a sadder but wiser Desiderio, love is what bursts out, what escapes into life and has no set definition or identity.

In contrast, Albertina conveys the Doctor's philosophy of love to Desiderio:

> 'The state of love is like the South in Hui Shih's paradox: "The South has at once a limit and no limit" [...] 'There is the mirror and the image but there is also the image of the image; two mirrors reflect each other and images may be multiplied without end. Ours is a supreme encounter, Desiderio. We are two such disseminating mirrors'.

The metaphor given for love here is one of endless reflection, endless objectification. The capacity to proliferate images of objects by subjecting otherness to a formative gaze has 'no limit'. Within this paradigm, nothing escapes being looked at, i.e. being objectified, as in the many peep shows containing images of objectified desires that the Doctor installs around the country, or the penetrating gaze of the Acrobats of Desire, who trap Desiderio with their eyes, and turn him into a sexual object. *But what Albertina describes is not love, but the production of desire, without the mitigating force of love.* Love cannot be seen or captured or defined or contained in an object, because it exists only in a *relation*; *love is what releases desire into the indeterminacy of interrelation.*

Albertina conflates love with desire in a reductionist paradigm: 'The ultimate simplicity,' she tells Desiderio, 'is Love. That is to say, Desire, Desiderio. Which is generated by four legs in bed' (203). Besides being reductionist, this view of love-as-desire isolates love within the realm of the physical, the 'profane' body, and cuts it off from the 'sacred' realm of the spiritual. If we recall that the collision between the sacred and the profane is for Carter (via the French surrealists) what

generates *amour fou*, we see that what Albertina identifies as love here is not, in fact, the transgressive freeing principle of *amour fou*. Instead, what she describes is merely an appropriation and containment of the effects of desire.

The Doctor tells Desiderio, 'All things co-exist in pairs but mine is not an either/or world. Mine is an and + and world,' (206) a dynamic which sounds as if it could exemplify the freeing of a sublime excess. However, that potential excess, which the Doctor terms the 'inexhaustible plus,' is reduced in the Doctor's language to the analytical term, 'eroto-energy'. The flaw in the Doctor's philosophy reflects his failure to focus on the sublime process of a love relation between self and an(other); instead, he is obsessed with a by-product of that relation, i.e. desire, specifically the ability of desire to create an infinite number of objectified images.

Love, in contrast to desire, might be viewed as that which refuses the principle of objectification, a commitment to creating a fluid, changing relation between subjects who are themselves constantly transforming. The tragedy of Desiderio and Albertina is their failure to establish a love-relation in life, having been taken over by larger principles, the struggle between Rationalism and Romantic desire. Desiderio mourns, 'And there were no more transformations because Albertina's eyes were extinguished' (220). His Beloved, Albertina, can no longer transform Desiderio's life because in a '*grotesque* denouement of [Desiderio's] great passion,' (216, my italics) the potential no longer exists for a sublime love-*relation* between them, as one of the parties is absent. The only consolation is memory; to be haunted is all Desiderio can hope for, to remain open to the indeterminate presence of a ghost. In the next section, however, we will discuss how Carter's later novels contain a more hopeful vision, in *NC* the possibility of a mutual and redemptive romantic love, and in *WC* the importance of maternal love.

A Somersault Forward: *Nights At the Circus*

As in *PNE*, *NC* also parodies the dynamic of the Romantic sublime by ironically inverting the position of the Other. But the situation of the Other here is more optimistic; Fevvers, the amazing bird-woman-aerialiste, is conscious of how women have been constructed in culture, and she chooses to espouse and exploit her position as the Other. Her identity is, in fact, based upon her otherness, but established through an ironic negotiation of that otherness. This negotiation involves Fevvers parading as a grotesque, self-overdetermined figure, in order to prevent herself from being objectified by the eyes of men.[56] This self-overdetermination obscures her true identity, and mitigates to a certain extent her objectification by others. However, it is ultimately the love-relation between herself and Walser that protects Fevvers from objectification. And it is through the love-relation between Fevvers and Walser that the grotesque is finally able to become sublime. As we analyse this dynamic, we will also speculate about the connections of this text to *IDMDH*, as well as its connections to Romanticism in general.

NC is the tale of Fevvers, the amazing bird-woman hybrid a.k.a. 'The Cockney Venus', a larger-than-life, bawdy-mouthed, burping, farting circus-queen. In short, in the Bakhtinian sense, she is grotesque, though Fevvers' grotesque self-construction complements her possibility to become excessively indeterminate, or sublime; thus her slogan throughout the novel is, 'Is She Fact, Or is She Fiction', and this uncertainty as to whether she is a freak or a fraud is what preserves her audience's fascination. Unfortunately, both alternatives leave Fevvers objectified by spectacle, even if she is ultimately in charge of that spectacle. It takes another person, Walser, to de-objectify Fevvers; Walser, whose original quest is to find out if Fevvers is freak or fraud, disguises himself as a circus-clown, and follows her across the world. The two find themselves entangled in various identity-

threatening and identity-transforming situations, and finally fall in love.

Fevvers is at first apprehensive of the extreme difference of her nature; she relates to Walser the history of her life as an emergent bird-woman, and the fear she had experienced the first time she attempted to fly:

> 'I suffered the greatest conceivable terror of the irreparable *difference* with which success in the attempt would mark me.
>
> I feared a wound not of the body but the soul, sir, an irreconcilable division between myself and the rest of humankind.
>
> I feared the proof of my own singularity'. (34)

Initially, Fevvers fears her own difference, her own otherness. In other words, she fears her own sublime qualities. To disguise her sublime nature, she constructs herself as a spectacle of exaggerated and extravagantly formed womanhood, and passes herself off in adulthood as a master (or rather, mistress) of the confidence trick. As a woman masquerading as a grotesque being, a being who objectifies herself through spectacle, Fevvers still possesses an identity, a subjectivity, which she has constructed for herself. If she were to present herself as a singularity, an embodiment of difference, i.e. a real bird-woman, however, she would be objectified by others and denied subjectivity. Fevvers is an ironic sublime Other precisely because she founds her subjectivity upon *a sublime difference which is perceived as grotesque in its embodiment*. We can see this in Walser's observation, as he 'smiled to himself at the paradox: in a secular age, an authentic miracle must purport to be a hoax, in order to gain credit in the world' (17). Fevver's 'credit' turns out to be her sense of self, her subjectivity.

Walser sums up Fevver's dilemma further, and the following passage summarises that dilemma, an analysis of which is crucial to an understanding of the novel:

> if she were indeed a *lusus naturae*, a prodigy, then--she was no longer a wonder.

> She would no longer be an extraordinary woman, no more the Greatest *Aerialiste* in the world but--a freak. Marvellous, indeed, but a marvellous monster, an exemplary being denied the human privilege of flesh and blood, always the object of the observer, never the subject of sympathy, an alien creature forever estranged. She owes it to herself to remain a woman, he thought. It is her human duty. As a symbolic woman, she has a meaning, as an anomaly, none. As an anomaly, she would become again, as she once had been, an exhibit in a museum of curiosities. But what would she become, if she continued to be a woman? (161)

Can Fevvers continue her grotesque charade as a symbolic woman, forever hiding her nature from a world that would immediately objectify her sublime otherness? And is it any better to be a woman who is objectified, than a freak who is objectified and denied even the pretense of subjectivity? Fevvers avoids this dilemma by 'pre-packaging' her own objectification so that she remains indeterminate in the mind of her public. Thus her paradoxical 'self-determined indeterminacy' renders objectification by others more an aspect of her own self-determination.

Fevvers knows the importance of not becoming *someone else's object*; she has been objectified in such a manner before. She tells Walser, 'during my blossoming years [...] I existed only as an object in men's eyes' (39). She refers to time spent in adolescence, posing as a statue of the winged Cupid, a stone representation of love; within this scenario, she occupies the deeply ironic position of a sublime Other posing as the objectification of a sublime love-relation (the Cupid), in order to camouflage her own sublime nature, as a *lusus naturae*, a signifier of 'irreparable difference'.

We will expand upon the irony of this image to illustrate additional ironies within the novel. The irony in this situation can be seen as twofold; Fevvers chooses to objectify herself, and through this element of choice, obtains an ironic subjectivity for herself *in her own eyes*. The other irony, of course, has to do with the idea of the grotesque as a relative term within culture, i.e. who is calling whom grotesque, and why. In the case of the latter irony, Fevvers recalls her time in the freak-house:

> it was those fine gentlemen who paid down their sovereigns to poke and pry at us who were the unnatural ones, not we. For what is "natural" and "unnatural", sir? The mould in which the human form is cast is exceedingly fragile. (61)

From the point of view of the 'grotesque object', the subject who looks with unnatural fascination at the object is the more grotesque party. It is no coincidence that one of the 'freaks' is named Albert/Albertina, the murdered sublime Other from one novel showing up as the unredeemed grotesque object in another.

To return to the irony of attaining subjectivity through choosing to be an object, in particular a grotesque object, we can parallel Fevvers' decision with that of the clowns. What the clowns experience, however (as Turner points out), is the sense of nihilism which characterises the subject mentioned in Bakhtin's Romantic grotesque. What Turner does not note, and something that holds infinite significance for Fevvers' plight, is that the grotesque clowns are described in similar terms to the Romantic sublime (M)other. We need only look at the adjectives Carter uses to describe their nature, i.e. they are 'chaos' and 'dissolution,' and when they dance it is the 'Dance of disintegration; and of regression; celebration of the primal slime' (125). By now, we recognise this primal slime as the terrifying aspect of the sublime (M)other. The reason the clowns cannot access the regenerative power of the sublime is precisely because they have objectified it quite definitively; they remain stranded in the Romantic grotesque. Once a clown has found his mask, he rigidifies into the identity of that mask, be it a Buffo-face, or a Grik-face, or a Grok-face.

It is relation, community with an(other), that allows access to the regenerative powers of the grotesque, and which leads the subject towards the sublime. For Carter's clowns, the sublime is divorced from relation, because the clown-identity is solipsistic, objectified, contained, fully determined. The clowns embody 'the nature of plus' (123) the same phrase in *IDMDH* used to

describe the objectifying process of desire, and a sterile excess (plus). The rigidly determined nature of the clowns highlights the necessity for Fevvers to remain an indeterminate being who embodies possibility, a creature such as the archaeopteryx in *PNE*, the grotesque hybrid who becomes sublime.

The trick, of course, is not so much how to keep breathing (*pace* Janice Galloway), but how to remain an indeterminate being, when the whole world is trying to make you into the object of their gaze. In the novel, however, the act of loving precludes objectification. Towards the end of the novel, Fevvers stands in danger of losing herself to the objectifying conception of others:

> Fevvers felt that shivering sensation which always visited her when mages, wizards, impresarios came to take away her singularity as though it were their own invention, as though they believed she depended on their imaginations in order to be herself. She felt herself turning, willy-nilly, from a woman into an idea. (289)

When Walser does not recognise her or remember that he loves her, the effect on Fevvers is devastating, and in the worst crisis of her life, she wonders, 'Am I fact? Or am I fiction? Am I what I know I am? Or am I what he thinks I am?' (290) Both of these passages outline an ongoing concern in Carter's fiction, namely that culture is, on one level, simply a shared idea. Once something has been revealed as existing because of an idea, it becomes vulnerable to reconstructions of that idea, be they 'positive' or 'negative'. With this acknowledgment, the notion of love becomes even more vital; without the sublime relation of love, ideas of the Other may become fixed and objectified. It is no coincidence that when the clowns dance 'the end of love', they dance 'the end of hope [...] The deadly dance of the *past* perfect which fixes everything fast so it can't move again' (243). Nor is it a coincidence the novel closes with Fevvers remark about her own identity, '"To think I really fooled you!"' which as Carter herself notes, opens up the novel to additional speculation about its characters.[57]

Fevvers, unlike the clowns, believes in love. Towards the end of the novel, the argument for love is staged as a humorous battle between Fevvers, who defends her choice to love Walser, and Lizzie, her adoptive mother, who adopts a rather rational, Marxist stance. Indeed, we might view the battle as an ongoing one between strategies of societal transformation which manifest initially at the level of individual relation as opposed to the level of institution. At the individual level, we see Carter's engagement with Freudian thought manifest as an obsession with the constructions and relations of subjects and objects. Indeed, we are told that the spectacle of Fevvers when she appears in Europe spawns the creation of psychoanalytic thought in Vienna. What Carter is most apt at illustrating is that the process of creating subjects and objects and their relations is itself an imaginative act, a fictional act. Though Carter's work is haunted by the legacy of 'history' in the form of oppressive institutions and material practices, her novels defend love with a fervour that is a mark of her commitment to the idea of love as revolutionary.

Fevvers defence of love is both externally focused and internally focused, but in both cases it is permeated with Romantic thought. Externally to Lizzie, she elaborates upon love's potential to transform the system, with Carter yet again invoking Blake, this time with a quote from 'London'. She tells Lizzie to

> 'Think of [Walser], not as a lover, but as a scribe, as an amanuensis [...] of all those whose tales we've yet to tell him, the histories of those woman (sic) who would otherwise go down nameless and forgotten, erased from history [...] ah,then! all the women will have wings, the same as I. This young woman [...] Will tear off her mind forg'd manacles, will rise up and fly away [...] The cages, gilded or otherwise, all over the world, in every land, will let forth their inmates singing together the dawn chorus of the new, the transformed'. (285)

Fevvers tells Lizzie she will utilise Walser as a scribe for the good of all womankind; in a Romantic

revolution wherein women's stories are told and witnessed, when the erasure of the sublime and heretofore missing feminine element of history is restored, women will become transformed, free of their oppressive histories, tearing off their their 'mind forg'd manacles'.

Lizzie remains skeptically rational, but in full Romantic flight, Fevvers continues as if 'intoxicated with vision,' revealing the internal focus of her grand revisionist thoughts:

> 'On that bright day, when I am no more a singular being but, warts and all the female paradigm, no longer an imagined fiction but a plain fact--then he will slap down his notebooks, bear witness to me and my prophetic role. Think of him, Lizzie, as one who carries the evidence'. (286)

To Lizzie, Fevvers represents Walser as someone who can help to turn imagination into fact, to create an army of Fevvers. She speaks of a day when creatures of singularity, sublime creatures of unknowable difference, will be acknowledged and given their due, not contained by history, but 'witnessed' in the fullness of their miraculous nature.

Although Fevvers defends and advocates love, it is a flawed rationalisation Fevvers presents to Lizzie; the truth that Fevvers hides from Lizzie is that she desperately needs not Walser's public journalistic skills, but rather his private regard to reaffirm her own sense of self. She tells herself, 'she would see, once again, the wonder in the eyes of the beloved and become whole' (285). In actuality for Fevvers, love has its most revolutionary effect on an individual basis, in its ability to create a sublime love-relation, in relation to which her identity will not be objectified. The flaw in the rationale Fevvers presents is when she claims that after there exists an army of Fevvers, then Walser will be able to bear witness to her, to produce the evidence of her existence. The truth of the matter is what Fevvers privately acknowledges; Walser holds the evidence with which he can 'bear witness' and testify to Fevvers existence, true enough, but not in his pen, or in the history he will write about

Fevvers. He holds the evidence of Fevvers in himself, evidence which only appears in the ongoing 'trial' of the sublime relation between self and an(other). Walser's 'evidence' is his share in an idea: the indeterminate idea of Fevvers, just as she contains evidence of the idea of Walser. The two act to affirm and reaffirm each other's indeterminacy.

So far we have described two different kinds of potential relations with otherness, relation to an otherness within, and relation to an otherness without. Relation to an otherness within finds expression as the grotesque, i.e. the notion of a hybrid self. We have seen this in *PNE* and *NC*. The relation to an otherness outwith the self is expressed by *amour fou* and the notion of 'the beloved'; Carter uses the phrase in *IDMDH*, and in *NC*, we are told that Walser

> was as much himself again as he ever would be, and yet that 'self' would never be the same again for now he knew the meaning of fear as it defines itself in its most violent form, that is, fear of the death of the beloved, of the loss of the beloved, of the loss of love. (292-293)

It is significant that Carter identifies the word 'self' self-consciously. The relation to the beloved changes the nature of selfhood; the self enters into relation with the other-as-beloved, the source of otherness who is both feared and longed for in his/her capacity to change the lover, to destabilise identity.

Indeed, love might be viewed as a 'third term,' a mode of mediation between subjects, and a mode which may be seen to be sublime because of the excessiveness and undecideability it evokes. Perhaps it is in this sense that we should regard Fevver's special 'triple-somersault' as recalling the earlier 'death-defying double-somersault of love', but with the significant addition of a third turn. The idea of a third space between subjects might serve to recall how in *Heterologies: Discourses on the Other*,[58] Michel de Certeau describes 'mad love' as 'an interspace [...] The converse equivalent

of a position that overcomes difference [...] A mystic move [...] Something extra (an excess) or added (a passage)' (de Certeau, 1986: 114). Within this paradigm, intersubjectivity exists between two selves who are each beloved, whose love is a third element, an 'interspace', both a mutual source of otherness, and a force which compels the self to move toward otherness. We will discuss the dynamics of this paradigm further in the conclusion, in which feminist and post-colonial modes of intersubjectivity and intermediacy will be compared.

We might end this chapter, however, with a commentary on Carter's *Wise Children* (1991), and the role of mothers and mothering in her final novel. Gamble sees Carter's later heroines as 'gentler and more humorous [...] Emphatically "female autobiographies"' (Gamble, 1997: 9), and part of this development of her female heroines focuses on the more maternal side of 'female autobiographies'. Unlike the highly symbolic and abstract treatment of the figure of the mother in a novel such as *PNE*, through the unfolding narrative of Dora Chance, *WC* examines a more concrete notion of motherhood and maternal love.

At the same time, Carter plays with notions of how this maternal love might foster a sense of indeterminacy and excess. *WC* follows the indeterminate paternity and maternity of three generations of identical twins. The novel is the story of Dora and Nora Chance, illegitimate daughters of the Shakespearian actor Melchior Hazard. The names play on surrealist Andre Breton's conception of *l'hasard objectif*, and as Dora notes, she and her sister are, 'Chance by name, Chance by nature. We were not planned' (24).

The union in *WC* occurs when the illegitimate, 'left hand' side of the family, is reconciled with the so-called legitimate 'right hand' side of the family, on the 100th birthday of Melchior Hazard. The Chance side of the family is characterised by its ability to love. Dora notes, 'Grandma raised us

not out of duty, or due to history, but because of pure love' (12). Peregrine (Uncle Perry) takes on the role of Dora and Nora's father, and the famous song he sings to them contains the significant line, 'I can't give you anything but love, baby' (33). The Hazards, by contrast, have plenty of fame, but there is no love lost between the members of the family, who are mainly in competition with one another.

It is at the birthday celebration that the different sets of twins finally untangle (but not definitively) their genealogies. Carter uses the notion of twins in two ways; they help to create this curious, indeterminate family tree, but they also illustrate the fluidity of identity between self and other. Dora describes Nora as, 'faithful as my looking glass' (95), and watching their images on the film-screen, Nora exclaims, "'We were a pretty girl!'" (110) The two girls swap boyfriends, and are only distinguishable to others by the difference in their choice of perfume, a marker of the fugacious yet vital difference within their sameness.

It is this apparent sameness that allows for the fluidity of their (sexual) identities, a fluidity typical of Carter's characters elsewhere who cross-dress and change sex. Dora and Nora also possess an element of androgyny; Dora notes that after a certain age, all women become female impersonators. The image of twins is used here to create characters whose identities are defined (or rather, whose identities defy identification) by the fluidity and indeterminacy of their selves.

In *WC*, Melchior's acceptance of the Chance twins as part of the Hazard clan signifies a melting of 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' boundaries. As if to symbolise this mixing of the families, Dora and Nora's Uncle Peregrine appears with Melchior's illegitimate grandchildren by his legitimate son, and these are given to Dora and Nora to raise. There is one important difference between these and all the other twins that preceded them; one is a boy, and one is a girl. The joining of the Chances

and the Hazards restores a balance, but this balance itself is significant not of some transcendent ideal as with an alchemical joining of male and female; it represents the collapse of ideas concerning what is legitimate and illegitimate, with an emphasis on the role that maternal love in particular will play in this collapse.

1. From Mina Loy's 'Aphorisms on Futurism', in *The Gender of Modernism*, ed. by Bonnie Kime Scott (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 245-47, (p. 245).

2. Mary Russo, *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess and Modernity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994).

3. Gerardine Meaney, *(Un)like Subjects: Women, Theory, Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993).

4. Sally Robinson, *Engendering the Subject: Gender and Self-Representation in Contemporary Women's Fiction* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991).

5. Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. by H.M. Parshley (London: Picador, 1988).

6. Shoshana Felman, 'Women and Madness: The Critical Phallacy' in *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Diane Price Herndl and Robyn R. Warhol (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1991), pp. 7-20.

7. Docherty, Thomas. 'Postmodern Characterization: The Ethics of Alterity' in *Postmodernism and Contemporary Fiction*, ed. by Edmund J. Smyth (London: Batsford, 1991), pp. 169-88, (p. 188).

8. M.M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. by Hélène Iswolsky. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

9. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

10. This is the position Sarah Gamble takes in *Angela Carter: Writing From the Front Line* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p. 85.

11. ibid., p. 51.

12. For a further commentary on this, see Sally Robinson's discussion of Carter's doubling techniques of masquerade, mimicry, and parody in *Engendering the Subject*, p. 98.

13. Other critical works such as Peter de Bolla's *The Discourse of the Sublime: Readings in History, Aesthetics and the Subject* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989) and Neil Hertz's *The End of the Line: Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), as well the work by Barbara Freeman and Patricia Yaeger previously cited in Chapter One, all refer to Weiskel as a starting point for at least part of their own critical works on the sublime.

14. For further readings in this area, see in particular de Bolla, *The Discourse of the Sublime*; Hertz, *The End of the Line*; David Simpson, 'Commentary: Updating the Sublime', *Studies in Romanticism*, v26(2), (1987), 245-58; as well as the readings by Yaeger, Readings and Freeman previously cited in Chapter One. Some of Jean-François Lyotard's critique in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984) is concerned with this issue as well, building from a Kantian idea of the sublime, and focusing upon Modernist and postmodernist uses of the sublime in art.

15. Weiskel, p. 79.

16. Yaeger, p. 204.

17. Weiskel, p. 32.

18. Gerald Gillespie, 'Romantic Irony and the Grotesque', in *Romantic Irony*, ed. by Frederick Garber, (Budapest: Akademiai Kiado, 1988), pp. 322-42.

19. Angela Carter, 'The Wound in the Face', in *Nothing Sacred: Selected Writings* (London: Virago: 1992), pp. 95-100. All subsequent references to essays by Carter will refer to them as they are collected in this edition.

20. 'Notes For a Theory of Sixties Style', in *NS*, pp. 85-90.

21. 'Industry and Artwork', in *NS*, pp. 61-65.

22. Karri E. Lokke, '*Bluebeard* and *The Bloody Chamber*: The Grotesque of Self-Parody and Self-Assertion', *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's' Studies*, v10(1), (1988), 7-12.

23. See in particular, Ann Snitow, 'Conversations With a Necromancer', in *Village Voice Literary Supplement*, v(75), (June 1989), 14-16, where Carter delineates her fascination with Freud, and in an interview with Lisa Appigananesi, Carter explains, 'I read Freud young, I enjoyed Freud. I thought that that was about life'. With regard to her rewriting of fairy-tales, Carter admits, 'Freud wins hands down most of the time'. Lisa Appignanesi, 'Interview With Angela Carter', *Guardian Conversations* (London and Northbrook, Illinois: Institute of Contemporary Arts, Roland Collection, 1989).

24. John Haffenden, *Novelists in Interview* (London and New York: Methuen, 1985).

25. Rory P.B. Turner, 'Subjects and Symbols: Transformations of Identity in Nights At the Circus', *Folklore Forum*, v20(1-2), (1987), 39-60.

26. Walter de la Mare, *Memoirs of a Midget*, with an introduction by Angela Carter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

27. Snitow, p. 14. In her *Guardian Conversations* interview with Lisa Appignanesi, Carter also expounds on various nineteenth-century literary influences such as 'James Hogg [...] The Brontë Girls [...] Nineteenth century writers of the fantastic', adding in the same interview, 'I tend to think Wordsworth is right about children'.

28. The painting is an acknowledged reworking of Rubens' earlier work, *Nature Adorned by the Graces.*

29. The figure of the many-breasted woman is also representative of the goddess Diana, and a further exposition of the Hogarth painting can be found in Ronald Paulson's *Hogarth: His Life, Art and Times, 2 Vols., Vol. 1* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1971).

30. Marie-Hélène Huet, *Monstrous Imagination* (Cambridge, Massachusetts. and London: Harvard University Press, 1993).

31. David Punter discusses this connection to Beulah in 'Angela Carter: Supersessions of the Masculine', *Critique*, (Summer 1984), 209-22, (p. 219), as does Elaine Jordan in 'Down the Road: Or, History Rehearsed', calling Carter's Beulah 'Blake's ideal taken over for a radical feminist laboratory of change' (Jordan, 1992: 175).

32. Linda Ruth Williams, *Critical Desire: Psychoanalysis and the Literary Subject* (London and New York: Edward Arnold, 1995).

33. In *William Blake, Complete Writings with Variant Readings*, ed. by Geoffrey Keynes (London: Oxford University Press, 1976).

34. Certainly, Kristeva's *Powers of Horror* is concerned with this, as are Luce Irigaray's *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. by Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985) and *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. by Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985).

35. In her *Guardian Conversations* interview with Lisa Appigananesi, Carter rejects any notion of an 'Earth Mother' as a viable feminist construction, and in *Feminist Futures*, pp. 11-19, Rosinsky discusses Carter's rejection of and satire upon an essentialised image of the mother in *PNE.*

36. Kristeva also uses Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque in *Desire in Language*, trans. by Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), in a chapter entitled 'Word Dialogue, and Novel'.

37. In *The Hélène Cixous Reader*, ed. by Susan Sellers (New York and London: Routledge, 1994).

38. Ricarda Schmidt, 'The Journey of the Subject in Angela Carter's Fiction', *Textual Practice*, (Spring 1989), 56-75, (p. 65).

39. Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, pp. 133-146.

40. Punter, p. 217.

41. Lucie Armitt, *Theorising the Fantastic* (London: Arnold, 1996), p. 175.

42. Freeman, p. 34.

43. Julia Kristeva, 'Women's Time' in *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Diane Price Herndl and Robyn R. Warhol, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1991) pp. 60-77.

44. Sue Roe, 'The Disorder of *Love*: Angela Carter's Surrealist Collage' in *Flesh and the Mirror*, ed. by Lorna Sage (London: Virago, 1994), pp. 60-97.

45. As Elaine Jordan has noted in 'Enthralment: Angela Carter's Speculative Fictions', in *Plotting Change: Contemporary Women's Fiction*, ed. by Linda Anderson (London, Melbourne and Auckland: Edward Arnold, 1990), 'Love is the positive term against which oppressive sexual relations are defined, in *The Sadeian Woman*' (Jordan, 1990: 20). However, Jordan retains a suspicion that this love may also contribute to a not entirely positive enthralment for women who, historically, have been trapped by the false promises of romantic love; love 'needs to be spoken for, but it is not unproblematic given the debris you have to wade through to get there' (Jordan, 1990: 20).

46. 'Love in a Cold Climate: Some Problems of Passion, Protestant Culture and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*', in *NS*, pp. 165-180.

47. In an interview with John Haffenden, Carter talks of the passion of *The Passion of New Eve* as being related to this suffering. See Haffenden, *Novelists in Interview*, pp. 76-96.

48. André Breton, *Mad Love*, trans. Mary Ann Caws (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1987).

49. Margaret Cohen, 'Mysteries of Paris: The Collective Uncanny in Andre Breton's *L'Amour fou*' in *Andre Breton Today*, ed. by Anna Balakian and Rudolf E. Kuenzli (New York: Willis Locker and Owens, 1989), pp. 101-10.

50. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1977). Foucault writes, 'The art of punishing traces the limit that will define difference in relation to all other differences, the external frontier of the abnormal [...] In short, it *normalizes*' (183). Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Routledge, 1990).

51. George Bataille, 'The Practice of Joy Before Death', in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, trans. by Allan Stoekl, with Carl R. Lovitt and Donald M. Leslie (Minnesota: University of Minnesota, 1985), pp. 235-39.

52. Colin Manlove, for instance, discusses Carter's references to Hoffmann in 'In the Demythologising Business: Angela Carter's The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman', in *Twentieth-Century Fantasists: Essays in Culture, Society and Belief in Twentieth-Century Mythopoetic Literature*, ed. by Kath Filmer and David Jasper (New York: St. Martin's, 1992), pp. 148-60. See also Peter Christensen, 'The Hoffmann Connection: Demystification in Angela Carter's Desire Machines' , *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*, v14(3) (Fall 1994), 77-83, and Suleiman, 'The Fate of the Surrealist Imagination in the Society of the Spectacle'.

53. In Ch. 4 of *The Feminine Sublime*, Freeman reads Tony Morrison's eponymous *Beloved* as a manifestation of the sublime, a haunting absent presence that demands its tragic death be made immemorial in the minds of others.

54. Ricarda Schmidt makes a similar point in 'The Journey of the Subject in Angela Carter's Fiction'.

55. Hoffman basically propounds Marcuse's theory in *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry Into Freud* (London: Ark Paperbacks, 1987), regarding the establishment of a less rigid reality principle.

56. Fevvers' control over her own objectification by spectacle, her consent to be the object of the gaze, is remarked upon by Suleiman in 'The Fate of the Surrealist Imagination in the Society of the Spectacle', and by Mary Russo in *The Female Grotesque*.

57. Haffenden, pp. 90-91.

58. Michel de Certeau, *Heterologies: Discourses on the Other* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986).

Chapter Three: Romantic Irony and the Fate of the Romantic Hero in the Work of Salman Rushdie - Heroic (R)evolutions

Romantic Heroism Revisited

In Chapter One, we discussed the construct of the artist as an heroic and/or prophetic visionary in terms of the conditions which caused this construct to become popular, as well as the perceived functions of this construct within a larger social context. It may be useful to briefly discuss the literary history that precedes and to a certain extent shapes Romantic notions of artistic heroism, in order to understand how Rushdie plays upon that history.

With Milton's 'heroic argument' in *Paradise Lost*, ideas of heroes and heroic deeds in literature shift from traditional acts of heroism as portrayed in the romance genre, and begin to focus upon the idea of poetic narrative itself as an heroic act. Milton, for example, pointedly eschewed the 'tinsel Trappings' of knights errant, and substituted his own vision of spiritual and rhetorical heroism.[1] Not only was Christ's spiritual redemption of mankind viewed as a heroic act, but Milton's own poetic argument ('To justify the ways of God to man',) was perceived by generations after him as an heroic artistic effort. Milton's role as the poet with an heroic vision almost certainly helped to set the groundwork for later Romantic notions of the artist as heroic visionary.[2] M. Keith Booker maintains that *TSV* rewrites the myth of the Fall 'in a variety of ironic ways' (Booker, 1991: 193),[3] and Anthony Close views the novel as having a 'Miltonic theme' based upon the Fall and the 'attempt to regain Paradise' (Close, 1990: 260).[4] As we shall discuss later, it is no coincidence that Rushdie, writing in a mode of contemporary Romantic Irony, quotes a significant passage from *Paradise Lost*, and alludes to Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* in *TSV*, even citing Blake's poem as one of the

two major influences upon that novel.[5] Rushdie's fascination with this Romantic text can be seen as one half of an ongoing dialectic between texts of British Romanticism and the textualisation of India, a relationship highlighted by Molly A. Daniels in *The Prophetic Novel*,[6] and John Drew in *India and the Romantic Imagination*.[7] Rushdie's various references to Romantic texts and authors can additionally be seen to reflect the continuing influence of Romantic literature on Indian literature, an influence Rosemary George documents in part in *The Politics of Home*, although George maintains that while such an influence is particularly evident in fiction concerned with creating strong female protagonists, it has begun to wane with the younger generation of Indian writers.[8]

Romantic heroism, and the demythologising of certain aspects of Romantic heroism, is a prominent theme in Salman Rushdie's novels. As with many modern usages of the hero-figure in literature, his work often ironises the idea of the hero for a contemporary context; originary fictions and assumptions of a sovereign selfhood are challenged by his construction of a fragmented, hybrid self (as we will discuss later), and by problematic interrelations between artistic and cultural authority. It is important to discuss many of Rushdie's characters as heroes, rather than protagonists, to understand how markedly he ironises the tradition of heroism, and how he reconceptualises an ironic heroism for contemporary times. As Rushdie himself notes in his essay in *Imaginary Homelands* (1991) (hereafter referred to as *IH)* entitled, 'On Adventure',[9]

> notions [...] of heroism [...] The adventuring spirit, when ruled by faith or ideology, has not been an entirely Good Thing. The behaviour of the Crusader knights, Spanish conquistadors and the like bears witness to this [...] When the spirit of adventure invades the historical process--when States or their leaders or representatives go adventuring--the results are usually catastrophic. From Genghis Khan to Napoleon and Mussolini, history is littered with examples of what happens when adventurers come to power: disaster, rapine, fire and the sword, Bad Things galore. (222, 223, 224)

Heroes, in literature and life, traditionally viewed the world as something to be conquered and subdued by their heroic acts; consequently, heroism is deeply imbricated with nationalist, and often absolutist religious sentiments. Romantic artist-heroes, as we have noted, were more concerned with redeeming society by secular means, i.e. with their artistic acts. However, as we discussed in Chapter One, literary Romanticism and nationalism were often linked by a desire to produce originary fictions. Within this chapter we shall explore how Rushdie continues to emphasise and problematise Romantic notions of secular redemption, origin and imagination to formulate his own highly ironic vision of artistic heroism.

What this chapter explores then, is Rushdie's tendency to ironise within his work Romantic notions of the hero and the heroic quest, along with other associated aspects of heroism. We will investigate Rushdie's stance on the redemptive, romantic love associated with the character of the hero, examine how he defuses and satirises the romance of nationalism, and question whether he avoids or reinscribes the problems often found in Romantic texts with regard to issues of gender. We will also examine whether the ideas of hybridity and migrancy put forth by Rushdie throughout his work serve to fragment Romantic constructions of originary, 'unified' selves, or whether such ideas inadvertently reintroduce notions of origin and unity.

In an examination of heroism within Rushdie's work, it would certainly be remiss to ignore Rushdie's own 'heroism' in the face of the 1989 Fatwa, and the fact that his struggle to overcome the worst of its effects has been a tremendous influence on both his life and his work. For Rushdie, within this context, the act of writing is arguably equivalent to an act of heroism, when seen as a continuing issue of freedom of speech; we will highlight this aspect of heroism in particular with regard to *HSS*, a story whose plot, as James Harrison,[10] Aron R. Ali[11] and Jean-Pierre Durix

suggest,[12] is somewhat reflective of Rushdie's current predicament.

What follows is a brief recapitulation, to describe how the figure of the Romantic artist-hero manifests in literature and society, in order that we might find resemblances between this figure and some of Rushdie's fictional characters. Significantly, there is more than one aspect of Romantic heroism to consider here: the artist/author as hero, and the character as hero, and we will investigate how these two ontological levels interact in Rushdie's fiction. One of the ways in which this happens is when the narrator within a fiction is a commentator upon the heroic actions of other characters. As Walter J. Reed has noted,[13]

> the narrator, the speculative purveyor of fictions [...] uses the hero as the solid basis for his own powers of invention [...] The meditator on the hero becomes, by this logic, the hero as artist. (Reed, 1974: 195)

In Rushdie's work, the character of the narrator often portrays himself as being both the inventive hero and the author behind the story being told (i.e. the narratives purport to be autobiographical), although the hero is almost always ironised and his heroism undercut in some way. An interesting mise-en-abîme occurs here; in a situation where the narrator or the 'purveyor of fictions' becomes 'the hero as artist', the 'actual' author (in this case, Rushdie) who is, after all, describing the artist-hero narrator of the story, becomes an heroic figure as well. Rather than serving to glorify the author as an heroic artist, however, we might speculate that in addition to the ironic undercutting of heroism in the novels, this tendency towards infinite regression which we will explore in Rushdie's work may also be seen as an ironic strategy; in one sense, it functions to displace rather than confirm artistic authority. In other words, it intimates that the 'author' is only one link in a chain of deferrals, rather than the ultimate source of meaning, i.e. it forces us to contemplate the rather open-ended question, 'who creates the author'?

Having outlined here and in the introduction some characteristics of the Romantic artist-hero, as well as some strategies for ironising the artist-hero, we might also ask the question, 'What characterises a hero of Romantic Irony'? For this, we might turn to Northrop Frye's descriptions: Frye's idea of the hero of romance resonates strongly with the idea of the Romantic artist as redemptive hero, a hero whose imagination can create marvellous wonders. In *The Anatomy of Criticism*,[14] Frye gives us definitions for the hero of romance:

> If superior in *degree* to other men and to his environment, the hero is the typical hero of *romance*, whose actions are marvellous but who is himself identified as a human being. The hero of romance moves in a world in which the ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended: prodigies of courage and endurance, unnatural to us, are natural to him [...] terrifying ogres and witches, and talismans of miraculous power violate no rule of probability once the postulates of romance have been established. (Frye, 1990: 33)

If we add to this Frye's definition of a hero belonging to the ironic mode: 'If [...] we have the sense of looking down on a scene of bondage, frustration, or absurdity, the hero belongs to the *ironic* mode' (Frye, 1990: 34), what we have is a hero whose position resembles many of Rushdie's own heroes. Later in this chapter we will also discuss the reasons why such a construction of the hero is particularly useful within a post-colonial context.

Ironic Heroism in the Novels

Saleem Sinai in *Midnight's Children* (1981) (hereafter referred to as *MC)*, has powers beyond the ordinary mortal, and marries Parvati the witch, who (as might be inferred from her name) also has extraordinary powers; to that extent Saleem fulfills Frye's definition of the hero of romance. Ironically, however, his powers do not save him from various imprisonments and eventual impotence, and throughout the story he tells the reader that he has started to fissure and crack into pieces.

Haroun and his father Rashid in *HSS* take a fantastical journey, and both are gifted with powers of story-telling and ingenuity beyond their fellow men. The motivation for their journey, however, is their desertion by Haroun's mother, and the subsequent loss of Rashid's special story-telling abilities, as well as the impairment of Haroun's memory. Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta in *TSV* undergo strange mutations and acquire some rather ambiguous supernatural powers, yet these powers tend to torture them more than aid them on their journeys. The eponymous Moor of *TMLS* combines the massive strength of his deformed hammer-hand with an accelerated aging process. No marvellous powers exist in Rushdie's Romantic heroes without an accompanying set of ironic disabilities.

Like their Romantic predecessors, the heroes in Rushdie's novels are obsessed with redeeming some larger social injustice. Reed notes that, 'The Romantic hero [...] may be pictured as an eventual redeemer of society' (Reed, 1974: 5). This is precisely the aspiration of Saleem Sinai in *MC*, as he dreams of creating a new and better society with the aid of the other Midnight Children. He exhorts them,

> 'Do not permit the endless duality of masses-and-classes, capital-and-labour, them-and-us to come between us! We', I cried passionately, 'must be a third principle, we must be the force which drives between the horns of the dilemma; for only by being other, by being new, can we fulfil the promise of our birth!' (255)

The Midnight Children represent a hope of plurality and regeneration for India, with their fantastic abilities and their formation of a mini-congress in Saleem's head to discuss the condition of the nation. It is important that Saleem speaks of the Midnight Children as 'a third principle' which can exist 'between' dualities of self and other, i.e. 'them-and-us': in the conclusion we will discuss the significance of this third element and how it relates to a hybridity, an in-between state of potential

mediation between subjects and cultures. However, Saleem fails in his dream of redeeming society from its divisive dualism; Jean M. Kane, for example, sees the Midnight Children as representing 'the dream of romantic nationalism' (Kane, 1996: 100)[15] which is doomed to failure. Instead of regeneration, the Midnight Children are subject to degeneration -- they can only hold trivial conversations, or are destroyed one by one by the State, and Saleem is reduced to telling the tale of his great hopes to his lover Padma. The story-telling itself, i.e. a narrative act of imagination, is the only hope offered in the novel, and we will explore this theme further when we discuss *HSS*.

It is further a mark of his similarity to the Romantic visionary that Saleem Sinai sees himself initially as a potential prophet; the first time he hears voices he thinks he has been chosen to spread the word in the tradition of the prophet Muhammed, and he underlines the connection between Mt. Sinai and his own name. In short, he is born into an heroic destiny, and he sets about trying to fulfill that destiny through the more secular organisation of the Midnight Children. Undercutting that destiny is the fact that Saleem has been switched at birth,[16] so his destiny as a Romantic figure immediately takes on parodic dimensions; his originary fiction is skewed from the beginning.[17] The narrative intimates that rather, it is the ominous and destructive Shiva who has the true (and sinister) Romantic destiny. Shiva is portrayed as a twisted patriot, who wishes to claim his despotic birthright as the first, e.g. original Midnight's Child, and subjugate the remaining Midnight Children; in an allegorical sense he can be seen to represent a monolithic nationalism fuelled by the emphasis upon origin found in Romantic aesthetics.

Offsetting the dangers of Romantic aesthetics in the novel is Rushdie's pervasive ironisation of his Romantic narrators; Saleem Sinai's character, for example, is distanced from the 'worthiness' of heroism, and his traditional heroic destiny is thwarted. In retrospect, as Saleem relates his fate to

Padma, he realises that he has never lived up to his heroic ambitions. He includes self-disclaimers in his narrative such as, 'not, I confess, the behaviour of a hero' (172), when referring to how he has used his miraculous abilities to cheat at school, or 'I confess: what I did was no act of heroism' (259), when judging his part as informant in an adulterous tragedy.

It is significant that Saleem is dogged throughout his life by his arch-enemy Shiva, who despite (or because of) being a violent murderer, becomes a decorated national hero. Saleem's own heroism rests finally not in heroic deeds for the state, but in telling his story in the hope that generations after him might be able to change things for the better in a non-violent way. Each of his so-called 'chapters' becomes a jar of chutney, whose ingredients include the 'memories, dreams, ideas' (460) behind India's political history. The creation of the chutney is a metaphor for the creation of a narrative which will someday reveal the hidden history of India; these jars of pickle are (significantly, in Romantic terms) Saleem's 'acts of love' (461), and they represent an heroic artistic effort to reveal the violence and corruption of politics, and the need for an alternative to this.

What *MC* illustrates is the failure of one kind of heroism, that of political action, to create 'a better state', and the possible success of another kind of heroism, that of the artistic representation of this failure. As we have said, the latter mode of heroism is not without its ironies in *MC;* Saleem is not the triumphant artist-hero of Romantic literature, but an uncertain, ambiguous figure. He is physically impotent and often undermines and questions his own accuracy of memory, and he constantly invites the reader to choose whether to believe his version of events or not. His narrative presents not the single, theological truth of the god-like author, creator, or prophet, but rather strives towards the ideal of 1,001 truths, 'the number of night, of magic, of alternative realities -- a number beloved of poets and detested by politicians, for whom all alternative versions of the world are

threats' (217). There are 1,001 Midnight Children born, and this is the tale of multiple and often conflicting visions that Saleem must relate.

Saleem is a hero in the mode of Romantic Irony, whose heroism contains within it the seeds of its own destruction; he is the twentieth century descendant of the Romantic artist-hero, and in the late twentieth century the terms of his revolution have become internalised, sublimated to the realm of an imagination whose fictional product is both necessary and consciously fallible. This fallibility is further emphasised by the relationship between Saleem and Padma, the lover who listens to Saleem's tale with alternating reverence and skepticism. For Reed, this ambivalence is characteristic within a contemporary Romantic tradition: 'The concern with the Romantic hero and with the complicating presence of the sceptical hero-worshipper does carry over into the twentieth century' (Reed, 1974: 188). Padma embodies this sceptical hero-worshipper; she awaits the next installment of Saleem's story with impatience, and yet when he writes in his narrative that she listens to him, 'captivated', because she loves him, she leaves in a huff. Padma is Saleem's 'necessary ear', both his supporter and his critic; in one instance she praises him for learning how to tell his story at a faster pace, while in another she upbraids him for mythologising the women in his story: '"They are just women, that's all," she insists. (406) Though an infrequent presence in the novel, she is arguably one of Rushdie's most powerful and empowered women characters, as she directly influences the telling of Salem's story. She also, as Harrison suggests, 'contributes to a pervasive ambivalence about artists and the artistic process', pointing out 'the essential fallibility of the artist and of whatever medium he or she uses' (Harrison, 1992: 65). Padma's scepticism contributes to the dismantling of any notion of transcendent artistic vision, and highlights the inadequacy and contingency of artistic authority.

Between Saleem's confessions of fallibility within his narrative, and the ambivalent reactions

of Padma, we can see that Saleem as a character represents an ironic reworking of the Romantic artist-hero. The idea of redemption by an heroic artist-figure seems to have lost most of its noble profile in *MC*, but there is a decidedly nostalgic, if ambivalent note struck at the novel's close;

> Yes, they will trample me underfoot [...] they will trample my son who is not my son, and his son [...] until the thousand and first generation, until a thousand and one midnights have bestowed their terrible gifts and a thousand and one children have died, because it is the privilege and the curse of midnight's children to be both masters and victims of their times, to forsake privacy and be sucked into the annihilating whirlpool of the multitudes, and to be unable to live or die in peace. (463)

Read within the paradigm of the Romantic tradition, this closing paragraph expresses both a hope for the future and an apocalyptic vision, in line with the pervasive apocalyptic tone present within much of Rushdie's work, as many critics have noted,[18] and as Rushdie himself has admitted.[19] The tone is almost parodically Biblical, and more than a little reminiscent of Blake's *Milton* i.e. 'I will not cease from mental fight'. For the narrator of *MC*, that 'mental fight' would seem to take the form of telling stories. These stories cultivate plurality in structure and content, and their conscious fallibility allows them to remain open to question. The emphasis on references to *The Thousand and One Nights*, and its associations in the novel with multiplicity and imaginative possibility, suggests that for Rushdie, hope for the future depends upon the expression of alternative visions, which create fissures (like those in Saleem himself) in so-called historical truth.

Although this rewriting of Romantic heroism is common to novels after *MC*, Rushdie's reworking of the tradition is by no means static. Returning to the idea of the Romantic hero as the eventual redeemer of society, we can see that this notion is treated very ironically in *TSV*. To fully understand this novel as an ironic reworking of the romantic, we must understand Milton's *Paradise Lost*, or rather, its reception by the Romantics. Blake considered Satan to be the hero of Paradise

Lost, as did many other Romantic poets.[20] The triumph of Satan was considered to represent the triumph of imagination over a totalising authority; all authors were in a sense Satanic, as they created imaginative fictions, in opposition to divine truth. In *TSV*, Rushdie builds upon this Romantic idea on more than one level.

In *TSV*, there are many 'satanic' characters, and they resonate with Romantic ideas about Satan as an heroic figure. We are most concerned here with two characters; the character Saladin Chamcha, who metamorphoses into a devil-like being, but who is also arguably the hero of the novel, and one particular narrator/character of the story who appears intermittently, purporting to be the force influencing Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha's actions, and claiming various affinities with Satan. We will explore these two characters in the context of Rushdie's ironisation of the idea that the Romantic hero is the eventual redeemer of society. We will see how neither character can be considered a redeemer of society, and how the idea of redemption itself becomes ironically twisted as notions of the sacred and of purity are called into question.

Saladin Chamcha is an Indian who strives to be the perfect Englishman, but when he falls from the airplane Bostan, which has been exploded by a terrorist bomb, a strange metamorphosis begins. His fall reflects the Fall of humankind from paradise, as Bostan is itself one of the Indian gardens of paradise. His form, however, is gradually transmuted into that of a satyr-like devil. In the novel, this transformation is indicative of two things. First, we have the Western projection of grotesquery onto the cultural Other, which is the other side of the coin that depicts 'the Orient' as pleasurably exotic. Second, we have what can be regarded as an external expression of the repressed internal (or infernal) anger at the continued degredation felt by a person who has been placed in the position of the Other. The struggle to create a self-image whilst caught between these two conditions is the dilemma of

Saladin Chamcha:

> A man who sets out to make himself up is taking on the Creator's role, according to one way of seeing things; he's unnatural, a blasphemer, an abomination of abominations. From another angle, you could see pathos in him, heroism in his struggle, in his willingness to risk: not all mutants survive. Or, consider him sociopolitically: most migrants learn, and can become disguises. Our own false descriptions to counter the falsehoods invented about us, concealing for reasons of security our secret selves. (49)

Saladin takes on this risky task of self-creation, and his external appearance after his fall (or Fall) reflects a certain nakedness of spirit, in which his attempts at self-creation are revealed. In one sense he is the quasi-satanic 'blasphemer' and 'abomination' who is involved in what can be seen as a heroic struggle for self-definition. His external body becomes a marker of this struggle, both in the 'false descriptions' he concocts, and the 'falsehoods' thrust upon him by others. This 'false' aspect of his life, not to mention his career as the man of 'a thousand voices and a voice' gives him a further affinity with the 'Father of Lies'.

Saladin's politically involved friends attempt to raise the afflicted Saladin to hero-status, by invoking him as a symbol to be reappropriated; '"It's an image white society has rejected for so long that we can really take it, you know, occupy it, inhabit it, reclaim it and make it our own"' (287). The Western world has conceived of the Other as a beast, so why not ironically use the beast as a symbol of power? 'Briefly, then, and with ironic inappropriateness, Chamcha the Anglophile "toady" acts as a rallying symbol for immigrant resistance to white resentment at this invasion by Byron's 'sun-burnt nations' (Harrison, 1992: 97). What is also ironic is that Chamcha, the hero here, though supplied with a new and transgressive appearance, is occupied with the same tactic of conquest used by 'white society'; the dissonance evoked by words such as 'take' and 'occupy' coming from the mouths of characters who should be familiar with the colonialist resonance of such words, however,

suggests that a significant distance exists between Saladin Chamcha's 'reclamation' and any advocacy by Rushdie of this reinscription of colonial strategy.

Rushdie suggests that it is the fear of his own 'otherness' that prevents Chamcha from becoming empowered. It is not through the achievement of iconic status that Saladin Chamcha's condition is relieved, however, but through a confrontation of his own anger:

> during Chamcha's brief but violent outburst [...] the horns on his head [...] definitely, unmistakably [...] *diminished* [...] Newness: he had sought a different kind, but this was what he got. Bitterness, too, and hatred, all these coarse things. He would enter into his new self; he would be what he had become: loud, stenchy, hideous, outsize, grotesque, inhuman, powerful. (273, 288-9)

He is eventually 'restored to his old shape [...] humanized [...] by the fearsome concentration of his hate' (294). Saladin is changed, however, and will never be able to return to the image he created of the perfect Englishman:

> What Saladin Chamcha understood [...] was that he had been living in a state of phoney peace, that the change in him was irreversible. A new, dark world had opened up for him (or: within him) when he fell from the sky. (418)

Saladin begins to accept the death of the self he had created in order not to appear as the detested, demonic Other. He is subsequently able to return to India to confront his cultural roots and his dying father, who has always berated him for glorifying English culture.

Despite Saladin's return to his roots, such a return does not necessarily indicate a nostalgic longing for cultural authenticity. As Aleid Fokkema notes in 'Post-Modern Fragmentation or Authentic Essence?: Character in *The Satanic Verses*',[21] in that novel 'the myth of authenticity is revealed to be an instrument of suppression', and that part of Zeenat Vakil's problem is shown to be that she is trapped in the 'confining myth of authenticity' (Fokkema, 1993: 61 and 52 respectively).

Likewise, in *Shame*, the narrator maintains that 'roots are a conservative myth, designed to keep us in our place' (86). Interestingly, Rushdie has admitted in an interview that

> the decision I have made for the moment about my life is that I don't want to go and live there [India]. However, then it's very interesting to have a fictional character who makes the opposite decision. You can see what happens. You send him off to do it and you don't have to do it yourself. (Meer, 1992: 72)[22]

Saladin's return to India is, as Rushdie has noted in the same interview, 'ambiguous', and possibly unsuccessful in terms of a long-lasting solution to his dilemmas, or as a negotiation of multiple cultures. This would argue against the novel being in support of a move towards a conservative notion of roots and authenticity, although Fokkema also accuses Rushdie, as does Ishrat Lindblad,[23] of creating characters whose quest for wholeness undercuts 'postmodern' pluralism.

Against this, it can be argued that instead of redeeming the authenticity of Indian society, at the novel's close, Saladin has, in a sense, accepted his own damnation, his own darkness and the end of his 'phoney peace'. With this acceptance he completes the transition from devil to human being, as if in order to be 'human' it were first necessary for him to negotiate a legacy of demonisation, the legacy of the orientalised Other.

If Saladin Chamcha's story is a commentary on the ironies of satanic *self-creation*, the other satanic narrator in the novel serves to highlight the profane nature of *literary creation*. We can regard *TSV* as being structured in part by a layering of 'satanic authorship'.[24] By satanic authorship, I refer to two different aspects of literary creation in the novel. The first concerns the creation of fiction as opposed to 'truth', i.e. fiction as a kind of lying, while the second concerns having a satanic figure that also corresponds to the figure of the author, i.e. the narrator character in *TSV* alludes to its satanic identity, and also claims to be the authorial force responsible for controlling the actions of

the main characters. 'Satanic authorship' also occurs within the storyline surrounding the character Gibreel Farishta, specifically his visions or delusions of being the Archangel Gibreel, and of 'dictating' the Satanic Qu'ran. (And we must not forget the implications along this line for Rushdie himself as the author of the novel *TSV*, a work regarded by many Islamic readers as a profanation of the sacred text of the Qu'ran.)

As we have discussed, within a sacred tradition where truth is singular, the pluralism of fiction can be regarded as a kind of lying. In the novel, the character Baal declares, '"People write to tell lies."' (285) Lying, as we have noted before, is an occupation connected to the figure of Satan; if God signifies the singularity of truth, Satan signifies the multiple quality of lies. Within the Romantic tradition, this 'lying' becomes the exaltation and the exultation of the imagination, the power to create marvellous fictions, the power of literary creation. Gayatri Spivak likewise notes that a central theme of the novel is 'the artist's identity [...] Here is the entire shift from Religion's God to Art's Imagination -- a high European theme -- played out in the staging of the Author' (Spivak, 1993: 112).

In addition to the stress upon imagination, it is no coincidence that in the passage from *Paradise Lost* quoted by Rushdie in *TSV*, we have Satan trying to deceive Eve by appealing to her 'organs of fancy'. In a vision, Gibreel Farishta remembers how:

> Ithuriel and Zephon had found the adversary *squat like a toad* by Eve's ear in Eden, using his wiles 'to reach/The organs of her fancy, and with them forge/Illusions as he list, phantasms and dreams'. (324)

What he recalls is a scene from *Paradise Lost*, (Bk. IV, lines 800-803), where Satan preys upon Eve's imagination (her fancy), and plants the seed of the Fall. In Romantic terms this represents a triumph

of the transgressive, imaginative powers of Satan.

Rushdie's use of Satan (or a satanic being) as an author-figure reflects this Romantic tradition of glorified 'lying', and playfully ironises it, using the devilish identity as a positive element, as Mann has noted.[25] We are introduced to the satanic narrator early in the novel, as Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta fall to the earth, and the narrator meditates on the miracle:

> I know the truth, obviously. I watched the whole thing. As to omnipresence and -potence, I'm making no claims at present, but I can manage this much, I hope. (10)

The narrator claims to know 'the truth', but cannot guarantee that he is either all-present or all-powerful. In one sense he possesses God-like powers, as he claims to be privy to the truth, and to be operating at a higher level of awareness than either Saladin or Gibreel. At the same time, the narrator invites doubts as to his (or her) godly status. In the twentieth-century continuation of the Romantic tradition, 'The omniscience of the author who relates the story becomes what one commentator calls, 'omniscient ambiguity' (Reed, 1974: 189). What we have, in effect, is a contemporary version of the heroic Romantic narrator, now an ironic being whose ambiguous nature forces us to question his omniscience. This is in keeping with the notion of a satanic narrator who might either be lying, i.e. telling a falsehood, or 'lying', i.e. he represents the author who creates fictions.

We are further encouraged to associate this narrator with Satan later in the novel. He declares, 'angels, they don't have much in the way of a will. To will is to disagree; not to submit; to dissent. I know; devil talk. Shaitan interrupting Gibreel. Me?' (93) Later he exclaims, 'You think *they* fell a long way? In the matter of tumbles, I yield pride of place to no personage, whether mortal or im-' (133). We are led to believe that the narrator is Satan, or some sort of devil. At the same

time, we are encouraged to conceive of this narrator as the author, as well. Saladin Chamcha wonders, 'For what was he [...] being punished? And, come to that, *by whom*?' The narrator reveals, 'I held my tongue' (256). We are led to conclude that Chamcha is either being punished by the narrator, or that the narrator somehow knows who is doing the punishing. Of course, it is Rushdie who is doing 'the punishing', pulling the puppet strings, etc., but his narrator seems to represent the figure of the author, a satanic author, perhaps even the author of *TSV*.

Indeed, when we finally receive a description of the satanic narrator, we find he bears a strong resemblance to Rushdie himself:

> For Blake's Isaiah, God had simply been an immanence, an incorporeal indignation; but Gibreel's vision of the Supreme Being was not abstract in the least. He saw, sitting on the bed, a man of about the same age as himself, of medium height, fairly heavily built, with salt-and-pepper beard cropped close to the line of the jaw. What struck him most was that the apparition was balding, seemed to suffer from dandruff and wore glasses. (318)

Rushdie is of medium height, is balding, wears glasses, and when he sports a beard it is notably salt-and-pepper. Gayatri Spivak notes this textual instance in particular as indicative of Rushdie's Romantic Irony.[26] Others have pointed out the similarities between Rushdie and Rushdie's narrator in *Shame*,[27] as well as the etymological correspondence between Saleem (in *MC*) and Salman,[28] and parallels between Rushdie, the '"empirical"' author, and the ironic narrative voice in *TSV*.[29] Additionally, Corcoran notes the correspondence of function between Salman the scribe and Salman Rushdie the author.[30] It is not unusual for authors to put themselves as characters into their own novels; this is, as we noted in the introduction, the most typical example of traditional Romantic Irony. But by placing into the novel a devil-like figure who resembles him, Rushdie adds another

level to the cat-and-mouse (or author-and-reader) game he has been playing. If the satanic narrator is meant to represent the figure of the author of the novel, it would explain his powers of creation. Such a representation would also indicate that, for Rushdie, the figure of the contemporary author is still very much connected to the figure of an heroic Satan, and to the figure of the Romantic artist-hero which draws from this idea of an heroic Satan. Of course, in a further ambiguity, given his powers of creation, the satanic narrator could also be 'God', as Booker notes.[31]

The novel presents us with clues as to the dual, ambiguous nature of the author figure in *TSV*. Gibreel Farishta enquires of the narrator-figure,

> 'Who are you?' [...]
>
> 'Ooparvala', the apparition answered. 'The Fellow Upstairs'.
>
> 'How do I know you're not the other One', Gibreel asked craftily, 'Neechayvala, the Guy from Underneath?' (318)
>
> [...] 'We are not obliged to explain Our nature to you', the dressing-down continued. 'Whether We be multiform, plural, representing the union-by-hybridization of such oposites as *Oopar* and *Neechay*, or whether We be pure, stark, extreme, will not be resolved here'. (319)

It is no coincidence that Gibreel's lover Alleleuia Cone possesses a copy of Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*; the author figure here seems to be a hybridised combination of both God and Satan. This hybridisation is itself highly ambiguous; it might perhaps represent the possibilities of a fiction that draws from many different sources, or conversely, the ambivalence of placing faith in the imagination when it is so closely connected through the notion of creation to theology.

What Gibreel Farishta's visions or delusions of being the Archangel Gibreel highlight is that it is the reader or interpreter of a text who defines its significance, rather than its author, or Author. When Gibreel is summoned by the prophet Mahound, he does not dictate the verses of the Qu'ran; they are torn from his mouth:

> The dragging again the dragging and now the miracle starts in his my our guts, he is straining with all his might at something [...] here it is *at my own jaw* working it, opening shutting; and the power, starting within Mahound, reaching up to *my vocal cords* and the voice comes. *Not my voice* [...] it's a Voice [...] My lips moving, being moved by. What, whom? Don't know, can't say [...] Being God's postman is no fun, yaar. Butbutbut: God isn't in this picture. God knows whose postman I've been. (112)

The 'miracle' begins with Mahound, who is in a sense the reader of the divine text supposedly supplied by Gibreel, who makes his living as an actor in 'theologicals' (i.e. as another interpreter of gods). We are led to believe that the mysterious force dictating Gibreel's sacred text to Mahound is not God, however, but the Devil, dictating the Satanic Qu'ran through the actor/impersonator (roles that further underline his function as liar) Gibreel. When Mahound declares that his first revelation was given by the devil, but the second by the Archangel Gibreel, Gibreel despairingly notes to himself, '*it was me both times, baba*' (123). In the novel, Mahound's interpretation of the 'text' he receives does not depend on the authority of Gibreel, but on the fictional forces he himself creates, although he *assumes* he is receiving the word of God. What he receives in the novel, however, is not the single, theological truth represented by God, but the multiple, imaginative fictions represented by Satan. These are ironically relayed through the fraudulent figure of the Archangel Gibreel (played by the 'saturnine' Gibreel Farishta), resulting in a further conflation of 'satanic' and 'angelic' or godly powers. (We might recall Carter's use of this hybridisation of angelic and satanic in her image of the archaeopteryx.) As Rushdie himself has admitted: 'I've always written from a position of celebrating impurities' (McCabe, 1996: 65). The clash between the sacred and the profane provide the central conflict in *TSV*; the book 'is about a dispute between [...] The sacred and the profane ideas of what a book is. The book whose legitimisation comes simply as an act of the imagination -- and these other kinds of books that are supposed to be handed down from another place [...] so-called revealed

texts' (Meer, 1992: 66), and the ambiguity of the narrator's identity is a mark of this dispute.

In his function as the victimised postman of some divine or satanic power, Gibreel fulfills the condition of 'omniscient ambiguity' which is a characteristic of the contemporary (and ironic) heroic Romantic narrator. In its contemporary guise, this narrator figure is privy to more than most, but ironically lacks significant knowledge. Gibreel Farishta reveals:

> *Mahound comes to me for revelation, asking me to choose between monotheist and henotheist alternatives, and I'm just some idiot actor have a bhaenchud nightmare, what the fuck do I know, yaar, what to tell you, help. Help.* (109)

Gibreel knows more about the nature of revelation than Mahound, but he remains at a loss as to what should be revealed. Ironically again, Mahound the 'interpreter', or 'reader', possesses this knowledge, though Mahound the *prophet* must believe in the notion of a singular divine truth, a singular interpretation revealed through the Archangel, if he is to make good his claim of writing (or rather, receiving) a sacred text, an 'Authorized' Qu'ran.

In *TSV*, Gibreel's punishment for 'writing' the Satanic Qu'ran corresponds, in effect, to the punishment of the author who dares to challenge a sacred text. Manipulated by a satanic author-figure, Gibreel himself becomes a satanic author of verses that challenge the sacred Qu'ran. The opposition of sacred and profane texts is one Rushdie has previously noted in his essay, 'Is Nothing Sacred?'.[32]

> whereas religion seeks to privilege one language above all others [...] one text above all others, the novel has always been *about* the way in which different languages, values and narratives quarrel [...] Michel Foucault [...] discusses the role of the author in challenging sacralized absolutes in his essay, 'What is an Author?' This essay argues, in part, that 'texts, books and discourses really began to have authors [...] to the extent that authors became subject to punishment, that is, to the extent that discourses could be transgressive. (420, 423)

Rushdie's knowledge of Foucault is significant; *TSV* depends on this idea of the secular text as

transgressive.

Rushdie goes on to hope that we might find within literature a 'third principle' of mediation between the material and spiritual (secular and sacred) worlds that would lead to a redemptive, secular transcendence. This would exist in opposition to religious transcendence, pitting a 'transgressive', pluralistic experience of life (and of textuality) against the absolutes of religion. In 'Is Nothing Sacred?' Rushdie admits,

> the question I have been asking myself throughout my life as a writer: *Can the religious mentality survive outside of religious dogma and hierarchy?* Which is to say: Can art be the third principle that mediates between the material and spiritual worlds; might it, by 'swallowing' both worlds, offer us something new--something that might even be called a secular definition of transcendence? I believe it can. I believe it must. And I believe that, at its best, it does. (420)

In the same essay, Rushdie writes that transcendence involves a temporary 'sense of being more than oneself, of being in some way joined to the whole of life' (421). This substitution of art for religion, and the accompanying desire for transcendence, seems nostalgically Romantic, and reminiscent of Okri's rhetoric in *Astonishing the Gods* (1995) (hereafter referred to as *AG*) and elsewhere. Later in this chapter, however, we will take up the issue of whether the fragmentary identity of the hybrid/migrant alters the character of that transcendence, or whether Rushdie's desire for transcendence remains embedded in Romantic metaphysics.

As much as Rushdie seems to be a proponent of literature as a medium of secular redemption, *TSV* itself heavily ironises the theme of Romantic redemption. The 'artistic visionaries' and 'prophets' we encounter here are not, as in the Romantic tradition, the eventual redeemers of society, but interpreters of various fictions, be they visions, dreams, delusions, or projections placed upon them by others. (Gibreel, for instance, oscillates between delusions that he is the sacred Archangel Gibreel,

and madness at thinking that he is being punished by God.) Perhaps this ambivalence about redemption is Rushdie's way of illustrating that ultimately, *society cannot actually be redeemed, only interpreted*. This movement towards (multiple) interpretation may be the closest notion to redemption we have in a contemporary Romantic tradition which continues to counter the monolithic signifying practices of a theological tradition. In a sense, we are all actors in a secularised 'theological', insofar as we place our faith in literature as a secular redemptive practice: one that permits multiple constructions and interpretations of a text, and encourages the imaginative powers of self-creation. Thus we may posit an answer to the question, 'How shall we, in this modern world, be 'saved'?'[33]

This theme is taken up perhaps more light-heartedly, but no less significantly, in *HSS*. When Haroun Kalifa, echoing the words of the evil Mr. Sengupta, angrily asks his father (the storyteller Rashid Kalifa), 'What's the use of stories that aren't even true?' (27) he gives voice to the question which propels Salman Rushdie's *HSS* through its various adventures. The novel is essentially a justification of fiction and storytelling, dedicated by Rushdie to his son Zafar, after Rushdie's 'exile'. In this novel, we can begin to see the importance of love to Rushdie's work, through its relationship with story-telling.

On one level, love in the novel expresses an attempt to communicate and share a common, plural narrative about the identity of subjects and the nature of their stories, their past histories. In 'Imaginary Homelands',[34] Rushdie writes,

> It may be argued that the past is a country from which we have all emigrated, that its loss is part of our common humanity [...] But human beings do not perceive things whole; we are not gods but wounded creatures, cracked lenses, capable only of fractured perceptions. Partial beings, in all the senses of that phrase. (12)

The Romantic in Rushdie yearns for a humanity that finds wholeness and a sense of connection within the common loss of the past, but this connection is made ironic by the knowledge that human beings are themselves fragmentary by nature, not even whole within themselves.

One might read *HSS* in connection with several comments about Romantic Irony itself. Connecting irony with Romantic subjectivity, Gary J. Handwerk writes,[35]

> irony is a form of discourse that insists upon the provisional and fragmentary nature of the individual subject and thus forces us to recognize our dependence upon some mode of intersubjectivity that exceeds the furthest extension of any individual subject. [Irony] can be traced back [...] to the initial Romantic posing of this problem--what, or where, is the subject? (Handwerk, 1985: 3)

Romantic Irony is thus concerned with the identity of subjects, an identity which is incomplete and fragmented because the subject's identity is dependent upon its location within a community. The nature of the human subject is *'a priori* social. Hence the subject requires another subject, requires the entrance into a dialogue, if it is to chart its own meaning' (Handwerk, 1985: 4). Through Romantic Irony, Rushdie examines the possibility that narrative can function as a tool for establishing a common connection to the story, or in this case, to the Sea of Stories. In his idealistic representation, the shared story creates a dialogue within a community; in this sense, narrative is a communicative dis-ease, a sharing of argument, a means by which we enact a belief in the need for plural, interactive articulation.

In the novel, love is also a means by which the individual may access a community (if only a community of two), and the loss of love in the novel also results in one of the main characters losing his ability to create stories, e.g. the grounds for a creating a larger sense of community. To summarise briefly, after his wife Soraya leaves, Rashid Kalifa loses his amazing power to tell stories. Haroun, out of love for his father, wishes to help him regain this power, so he travels to the mythical,

mystical Sea of Stories. The impetus behind the novel's narrative is love, both romantic and filial. Haroun and Rashid love Soraya, and also the stories which are in danger of being poisoned by the evil Chupwalas. Both loves involve a love of 'origin', in that Soraya is Haroun's mother, and the Sea of Stories is the origin of Rashid's wonderful tales. In both cases, a concern with origins is tied to the creative act, be it procreation or the synthesis of narrative. The search for the lost mother, a pervasive characteristic of the romantic, as we defined it in Chapter One, may also be seen as doubled in the search for both Soraya (la mère) and the Sea of Stories (la mer).

In the novel, the irony of love lies not in its origin or creativity, but in its popularisation, in a facile conception of love. Among all the Guppees, only the insipid Bolo possesses certainty, in his love for the awful Batcheat. When Haroun questions this certainty, he is told, '"It is Love [...] It is all for Love. Which is a wonderful and dashing matter. But which can also be a very foolish thing"' (121). This is evinced in Bolo's flowery language, i.e. '"Where are you, Batcheat, my golden girl, my love? Batcheat, O Batcheat mine!"' (186) and in Batcheat's substitution of Bolo's name within a number of popular love songs. Equally comical is her insistence that the court pages (whose clothes contain various textual messages) dress so as to advertise Bolo as the protagonist of past heroic tales (i.e. Bolo and the Golden Fleece).

In 'Is Nothing Sacred?', Rushdie comments upon the continuing importance of love in a contemporary context. He declares that an attack must be answered not with another attack,

> but by a declaration of love. Love can lead to devotion, but the devotion of the lover is unlike that of the True Believer in that it is not militant. I may be surprised--even shocked--to find that you do not feel as I do about a given book or work of art or even person; I may very well attempt to change your mind; but I will finally accept that your tastes, your loves, are your business and not mine. Love need not be blind. (415)

Instead, for Rushdie, love is a means of seeing and accepting all points of view; because of its acceptance of multiplicity, love is capable of evoking imaginative possibility, a necessary precondition for the narrative act. Rushdie does, however, ridicule the notion of the Romantic *quest*, motivated by a love that has been taken over by ridiculous literary conventions and populist measures. The buffoonish Prince Bolo declares, '"Just as my great passion, my Amour, leads me to Batcheat, always towards Batcheat, so this boy's destiny is to rescue what he loves: that is, the Ocean of Stories"' (138). Rushdie juxtaposes the ridiculous and the sublime within the heroic, Romantic impulse; he acknowledges the ridiculous side of romantic love, while attempting to salvage the notion of the heroism it fosters with regard to its role in the creation of communal narrative. The Chupwalas are poisoning the stories, and will plug up the Source of all stories, if they are not stopped. The age of heroes and quests may have passed into pastiche, but the need for heroic rhetoric remains, especially in the light of continued censorship; heroism is rewritten as both the need to speak out against oppression, and to imagine, and thus create, possibility.

Rushdie plays on this project of narrative to imagine and thereby create a thing, to self-consciously create the possibility of a romantic happy ending for Haroun and his father. In doing so, he highlights a reciprocal need between the narrative act and romantic love; the head scientist the Walrus ironically notes, '"It is precisely because happy endings are so rare [...] that we [...] have learnt how to synthesize them artificially. In plain language: we can make them up"' (201). 'Plain language' may be viewed as an ironic reference to the literary narrative, which is not plain at all, but full of imaginative possibility. The irony here exists in the fact that regardless of the saccharine sentimentality surrounding love, and of the notion that love can conquer all, love itself does not necessarily create 'a happy ending'. Rather, in *HSS*, the act of love is constructed to show that love

requires narrative to exist as much as narrative requires love.

Within the novel's narrative, love's capacity to empower lies in its ability to act as a motivating force, a means by which individuals and communities find the strength to create their identities through their stories, as we will see elsewhere in the novel. In the novel, the act of creation is 'artificial', but no less potent for its artificiality, as when the rain of happy endings, precipitates (so to speak) Soraya's return. To the question of whether this return is the Walrus' work, Haroun receives the answer, '"Maybe so and maybe no"' (210). The final question as to whether narrative enables the possibility of love, or whether the possibility of love enables narrative, remains characteristically open. More importantly, in the novel the interaction of the two may be viewed as a type of agency, an empowering of self which results from utilising one to enhance the other.

Whereas before Haroun helps his father, Rashid is known simply for his cheery stories, after completing the journey which has been motivated by love, Rashid's narrative is able to effect political change. Here we can see love as a catalyst for the subversive imagination:

> Whenever Rashid was talking about Khattam-Shud and his henchmen from the Union of the Zipped Lips, the whole audience stared very hard at Snooty Buttoo and *his* henchmen [...] And when Rashid told the audience how almost all the Chupwalas had hated the Cultmaster all along, but had been afraid to say so, well [...] *yes*, people muttered, *we know exactly how they felt*. (206)

In a move of solidarity, the crowd scares away the tyrannical Snooty Buttoo, a thinly disguised parody of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and so are free to elect whomever they please. Rashid's stories provide the means by which individuals can recognise and identify themselves; here the story is used as a tool to unify, a means by which communal identity can be formulated and accessed by individuals. Individuals and communities recognise themselves in terms of their stories, the composition of which is not only an act of imagination, but an act of identification.

This aspect of the romantic verges on the nationalistic, and is mitigated in the story by the fact that the unifying narrative is used in opposition to an oppressive narrative of power. One subversive use of fictional narrative lies in the possibility of creating a story the oppressed can use to identify the origin and history of their oppression. By positing an origin of historical causality in this manner, a post-colonial community may find it possible to organise a resistance to imperialist historical influences. In 'Julian Barnes',[36] Rushdie praises Barnes' idea in *A History of the World in 10 1/2 Chapters*, that '*the opposite of history is love*' (242). With regard to Rushdie's fiction, we might identify this movement beyond history, towards an imaginative narrative propelled by love, as the motion by which politically oppressive narratives may be overturned.

We can see this process in operation in *HSS* when we focus on Rushdie's metaphor for the imagination, the Sea of Stories itself. The Sea of Stories contains an infinite number of possible stories, synthesised by the Plentimaw fishes. The Plentimaw fishes enable the creation of new narratives, and it is significant that they always travel in pairs. They are 'faithful to partners for life', and possess 'multiple mouths' (85), qualities which highlight that narrative is an act of love, and that it is polyphonous in nature. The name Plentimaw, punning as it does on plenty of maws, and plenty more, evokes both mulitiplicity and a sense of replenishment. The Sea of Stories is processed through the Plentimaw fish, who are

> 'hunger artists'--'Because when they are hungry they swallow stories through every mouth, and in their innards miracles occur; a little bit of one story joins on to an idea from another, and hey presto, when they spew the stories out they are not old tales but new ones [...] new stories are born from old---it is the new combinations that make them new'. (85-86)

Rushdie's new stories and new histories are created from the reworking of past tales, or past histories. This process of reworking finds its seat in the figure of the artist, who uses imagination to synthesise

'novel' forms of and from old stories. (Just so, Rushdie evokes the figure of Kafka's 'hunger artist' in his Plentimaw fish, who use their own bodies to facilitate the creation of art.) Stories are 'born' (a process Rushdie describes in 'Is Nothing Sacred?' as transcendent) from the imagination, after the artist has 'swallowed' the world. This process of transcendent synthesis does not seek to unify the stories, however, but rather to pluralise and hybridise them. Later in this chapter, I will also discuss this idea of hybridisation as it applies to individual characters in Rushdie's novels.

What remains 'eternal' for Rushdie, however, is the origin of narrative, the human impulse to utilise the imagination to create and share a story. Precisely because of this commitment to a human factor, human mediation and innovation, Rushdie's ironies return in the end to a Romantic conception of the artistic project. Imagination is tied to origin, to a transcendent prehistory we must draw from to subvert history. The ocean consists of 'the oldest stories ever made', and Iff the Water Genie (himself an emblem of possibility, i.e. if(f) only) laments,

> 'We let them rot, we abandoned them, long before this poisoning. We lost touch with our beginnings, with our roots, our Wellspring, our Source [...] And now, look, just look! No colour, no life, no nothing. Spoilt!' (146)

The stories woven by imagination are a source, a beginning, a wellspring. The power of narrative lies in its connection to an imaginative origin, wherein can also be found the origin of identity: '*our* beginnings, *our* roots, *our* Wellspring, *our* Source'. The capitalisation of Wellspring and Source lend a sense of the divine to these words, revealing a transcendent longing for the Origin, for a time before history. Ali notes both that, the longing for both 'religion and the tradition of stories' reveals a desire for 'self-affirmation and transcendence' (Ali, 1995: 105) in *HSS*, and that the Wellspring confers 'a distinctly transcendent essence' (Ali, 1995: 123) upon the story tradition.[37]

In the novel, this prehistory is tied to the unconscious; Rashid travels to the Story Moon

Kahani in his dreams (i.e. via the unconscious), by 'a process known as Rapture' (99). Rapture, capitalised and signifying a state of ecstasy within dreams, leads us once more to contemplate Rushdie's affinities with Romantic notions of the imagination. In the novel, the individual imagination not only affects the world, but also effects it. For example, in *HSS*, a strong enough belief in imagination enables Haroun to move the moon, and elsewhere imagination lets various characters change the physical landscape.

In Rushdie's novel, it lies within the power of the individual to imagine and argue possibility into reality. To move the Story Moon, Haroun uses his imagination to overcome his personal, temporal tragedy (after Soraya leaves, he becomes unable to concentrate for more than eleven minutes at a time). Likewise, to change the Dull Lake from stormy waters to calm, each individual character must change his thoughts from negative to positive, as even one person's anger or sorrow will create a dense, impenetrable fog over the lake. The Dull Lake exists as a counterpoint to the Sea of Stories, everyday life as opposed to the life of the imagination, but even the quotidian can be transformed in Rushdie's imaginative scheme. This individual, transformative act is both artistic and subversive in nature; as Rushdie writes in 'Imaginary Homelands', the risks in any artistic work lie 'in pushing the work to limits of what is possible, in the attempt to increase the sum of what it is possible to think' (15). The sum (a collective) is increased, but notably by individual risk-taking.

In Rushdie's writing, a belief in the transformative powers of the imagination combines with a commitment to narrative argument to create a powerful artistic force. The notion of argument becomes important in *HSS*, and can be seen to represent plurality, and the possibility of amicable dissent. Haroun and Iff arrive aboard Butt the Hoopoe bird, another native of Gup; as Iff's name represents possibility, But(t)'s name embodies argument and debate. He is notable for his ability to

adapt to two worlds (in his earthly incarnation he is a bus-driver with feathery hair, while his Kahanian identity is as a bird with hair-like feathers), as well as his ability to traverse the space between them.

Butt the Hoopoe gives us a clue as to how argument might be tied to the notion of transcendence. As Sushila Singh points out in her article, '*Haroun and the Sea of Stories*: Rushdie's Flight to Freedom',[38] the hoopoe is a mythical bird from a twelfth-century Sufi narrative poem entitled *The Conference of Birds*.[39] Aside from the notion of conference itself, which Rushdie has used in *MC* as a metaphor for plurality of identity and argument (i.e. The Midnight's Children Conference Saleem Sinai holds in his head), the story relates to a religious transformation. The hoopoe leads twenty-nine other birds on a quest to find the god of birds atop a distant mountain. When the birds arrive, they find no god, but they themselves are subsequently transformed into gods. The birds' attainment of divinity, of godhead, after a quest to establish their identity as subjects of that god, is reminiscent of the end Hegel posits for a dialectical, human history: the final, transcendent synthesis of godhead. In this case, however, that transcendence is pluralised, hence the metaphor of the conference. Within Butt the Hoopoe, Rushdie's version of 'the flight to identity' combines the religious concept of transcendence inherent in the Sufi myth, with a secular concept of argument. Butt the Hoopoe embodies the transcendent aspect of secular argument, connecting the god-like bird with the 'but' of argument. Just as Butt adapts to and negotiates different worlds, adaptation and negotiation of difference become key principles within Rushdie's narrative argument, which creates a space for dissent, or difference of opinion. For Butt, identity itself is an adaptation based upon a response to differences, ironically dependent not upon who he (*qua* subject) is, but in which community (in which objective world) he happens to be at the time. This is significant within a post-colonial context since,

as Kane emphasises, post-colonial identity is performative rather than essential, and thus the subject, 'who', changes according to its location, its 'where'.[40]

Rushdie presents us with a dichotomy between argument and silence; narrative is produced from the love of argument, while an ominous silence is produced by the repression of argument. In the novel, this terrible figure of silence and anti-narrative takes the form of the evil Khattam-Shud, which literally means '"completely finished", "over and done with"' (218). Rashid tells Haroun that,

> 'Khattam-Shud [...] is the Arch-Enemy of all Stories, even of Language itself. He is the Prince of Silence and the Foe of Speech. And because everything ends, because dreams end, stories end, life ends, at the finish of everything we use his name "It's finished [...] it's over. Khattam-Shud: The End"'. (39)

On Kahani, Khattam Shud plots the poisoning of the Sea of Stories with 'anti-stories', which function to drain narrative of its positive qualities. His counterpart on Earth is Mr. Sengupta, the clerk with no imagination, who steals Soraya away and thus robs Rashid of his ability to tell stories. Significantly, the combination of Haroun and Rashid's names evokes a character from *The Thousand and One Nights* -- Haroun Al Rashid[41] -- and their presence embodies the positive qualities attached to '1,001' in so much of Rushdie's work.

We are told by Rashid that the land of Chup, ruled over by Khattam-Shud, '"is a place of shadows, of books that wear padlocks and tongues torn out"' (102). Khattam-Shud's voice is 'dull' and 'flat', while he himself is a figure of anti-imagination, a clerk whose sole desire is to negate the positive and subversive possibilities within narrative. (In this sense, he is curiously reminiscent of Carter's Dr. Hoffman, equally colourless in the final analysis, despite his great ambitions.) Against this negative force, Haroun and the Guppee army heroically pit themselves. It is 'a war between Love (of the Ocean, or the Princess) and Death (which was what Cultmaster Khattam-Shud had in mind

for the Ocean, and for the princess, too)' (125). While Haroun fights against the shadow of Khattam-Shud (who has detached himself from his own shadow in order to be in two places at once), the Guppees prepare for combat with the Cult-Master himself. The army of Gup embodies the positive qualities of argument; each soldier-Page is part of a 'Chapter' or 'Volume', '"headed by a Front, or Title, Page,"' and the entire army is known as a 'Library'. The connection to writing and books as a means of fighting back against oppressive political systems is an obvious one, and thus provides a response to what Kane sees as the valorisation of the imagination to the point where aesthetics absorbs politics.[42] Instead, the book's celebration of imagination cannot be separated from its political stance regarding democratic free-speech.

While the Chupwalas believe in silence and terror, the Guppee army thrives on free-speech, a quality which ultimately leads to their victory over the Cult-Master:

> The Pages of Gup, now that they had talked through everything so fully, fought hard, remained united, supported each other when required to do so, and in general looked like a force with a common purpose. All those arguments and debates, all that openness, had created powerful bonds of fellowship between them. (184-5)

In the essay 'Censorship'[43] Rushdie writes, 'opposition is the bedrock of democracy' (40). Instead of individual argument being a tool of division, or an alienating force, in *HSS,* it necessitates and ironically facilitates the formation of a close-knit community. Because of its commitment to the expression of individual opinions, this community possesses a sense of agency, and can act collectively to ensure that conditions remain favourable for the expression of individual opinions.

Following this notion of individual consciousness within a community, it then becomes interesting to speculate upon what happens to both of these constructs when the individual possesses a distinctly fragmentary consciousness: when, in effect, the individual possesses a community inside

itself. In Rushdie's writing this split, or communal, individual may be viewed as contradictory as opposed to paradoxical, based upon the positive articulation of argument versus the fundamental incompatibility of belief-systems. In *HSS*, we find a metaphor for this split-self or hybridised subjectivity in the Shadow Warriors of Chup. These entities possess sentient shadows, with whom they must form a partnership in life. Mudra the Shadow Warrior tells the Guppee party of his defection from the Cultmaster, while his shadow informs the Guppees that

> 'in the land of Chup, Shadows are considered the equals of the people to whom they are joined [...] Chupwalas live in the dark, you know, and in the dark a Shadow doesn't have to be one single shape all the time. Some Shadows [...] learn how to change [them]-selves, simply by wishing to do so [...] What's more [...] a Shadow very often has a stronger personality than the Person, or Self, or Substance to whom or to which it is joined! So often the Shadow leads, and it is the Person or Self or Substance that follows. And of course there can be quarrels between the Shadow and the Substance or Self or Person; they can pull in opposite directions [...] but just as often there is a true partnership, and mutual respect'. (132)

There are several phrases within this passage, which as a whole can be viewed as contributing to an aesthetic about hybrid subjectivity. The Shadow Warrior and his shadow are, 'equals', and though they may have 'quarrels' and 'pull in opposite directions', many achieve 'true partnership, and mutual respect'. The emphasis on equality, 'true' partnership, and mutuality expresses a longing for a democratic union of spirit within the subject's many fragments.

The element of darkness, generally associated with evil in the traditional battle between good and evil, is here a positive quality, enabling a certain protean existence for the shadows who inhabit that darkness. Darkness also has the significance of otherness, i.e. the sub-altern Other. The Shadow Warriors and their companion shadows use a language of gestures, as they cannot speak. This lack of articulation on the part of Murdra and his shadow might well be Rushdie's 'tongue-in-cheek' response to Spivak's well-known essay, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?'[44] Here, the natives speak, but

in their own alternative language, which Rashid the Storyteller can understand and interpret.

It is significant within the novel, that darkness in another context has ties with the unconscious through the night and dreams, and with an imagination that springs from the unconscious. The story-teller Rashid is the only one able to interpret the language of shadows, because of his mutual imaginative affinity with both stories and shadows. The storyteller becomes a kindred spirit to the Shadow Warrior, both associated with a darkness that represents possibility, artistic creativity and perhaps the unconscious, rather than 'evil'. Todd views the Shadow Warrior as 'a "third thing" [...] obscure, inscrutable, genuinely shadowy: it is the privileged arena of confrontation between the literal and its figure' (Todd, 1993: 82) out of which arises the possible; this space of possibility represented by the 'third thing' is reminiscent of Bhabha's 'third space', which we will discuss later, in the conclusion.

Through its advocacy of such possibility, *HSS* is, in one sense, an allegory of free speech; but Rushdie's other novels are all, in one way or another, concerned with this: *TSV* perhaps most deeply. In 'One Thousand Days In A Balloon'[45] Rushdie writes,

> Sometimes I think that, one day, Muslims will be ashamed of what Muslims did in these times, will find the 'Rushdie affair' as improbable as the West now finds martyr-burning. One day they may agree that--as the European Enlightenment demonstrated--freedom of thought is precisely freedom from religious control, freedom from accusations of blasphemy. Maybe they'll agree, too, that the row over *The Satanic Verses* was at bottom an argument about who should have power over the grand narrative, the Story of Islam, and that that power must belong equally to everyone. (Rushdie, 1992: 432)

It is ironic, and yet there is a sense of inevitability, that Rushdie should be persecuted for advocating freedom of thought and speech, for glorifying the multiplicity of 'reality'. The difference in modes of interpretation between extremist Islam and 'the West' is precisely at the

heart of *TSV*; monolithic theological truth versus the multiple, fluid nature of fiction, speech, 'reality'. The former constructs a rigid binary opposition between religious faith and blasphemy, the other represents an ideal held to be sacred to the West: freedom of expression.

Perhaps it is no coincidence that Rushdie's first literary effort after *HSS* is entitled *East, West* (1994). His own 'heroism' lies in a continuing negotiation of the conflicts produced by the difference in methods of interpretation between 'East' and 'West'. As he himself puts it in 'One Thousand Days in a Balloon',

> Obviously, a rigid, blinkered, absolutist world-view is the easiest to keep hold of; whereas the fluid, uncertain, metamorphic picture I've always carried about is rather more vulnerable [...] If that plunges me into contradiction and paradox, so be it; I've lived in that messy ocean all my life. I've fished in it for my art [...] It is the sea by which I was born, and which I carry within me wherever I go. (438)

The sea in *HSS* might be seen, in part, to represent Rushdie's own metaphorical battle with self-creation and literary creation. Rushdie's quest for self-purification ironically entails immersing himself in a 'messy', paradoxical 'sea'.

Most religions use notions of purity and impurity to define and enforce acceptable sexual and social behaviours. Rushdie's fiction turns the notions of 'pure' and 'impure' on their heads; in *HSS*, the streams are being polluted, made impure, by the dark forces of silence, by those who wish to control discourse. In their 'pure' state, the streams go on happily multiplying and mutating, what traditionally would be regarded as becoming impure.

The 'impure' for Rushdie becomes a sign of that messy, metamorphic state of existence, while 'self-purification' involves the acceptance of that 'impure' state of being. To relate this back to notions of heroism, Rushdie's sense of 'self-purification' might be regarded as a kind of heroism, i.e. heroism as learning to embrace what has traditionally been regarded as 'impure'. We will take

up these notions of pure and impure later in the chapter, when we discuss the issue of hybridity. However, it must be said that to use these notions of purity and impurity, even while rewriting them, is dangerous. It may, however, be necessary, as these same notions are an integral part of sacred discourse, the same discourse which, like the Romantics, Rushdie is at once drawing from and drawing away from; through this dual movement, his writing falls within the mode of a contemporary Romantic Irony in the service of post-colonial politics.

Female Heroines: The Case of Shame

It is ironic that the heroine of *The Thousand Nights and One Nights* is a princess who depends on her ability to tell story within story to keep her alive; Rushdie has a fascination with the idea of textual multiplicity that *The Thousand and One Nights* represents, but he is largely unable to produce a female character who can fulfill this. Instead, references to *The Thousand and One Nights* appear in *MC* almost like a textual tic. There are a thousand-and-one Midnight Children, '1001' is 'the number of night, of magic, of alternative realities - a number beloved of poets and detested by politicians, for whom all alternative versions of the world are threats' (217), the jugglers in the bazaar manage 'to keep one thousand and one balls in the air at a time' (387), and the day of justice will not come 'until the thousand and first generation, until a thousand and one midnights have bestowed their terrible gifts and a thousand and one children have died' (463). Additionally, the ostensible hero-figure of *TSV*, Saladin Chamcha, is known as the man of 'a thousand voices and a voice'. For Rushdie, the heroism of *The Thousand and One Nights* seems not to lie with its heroine, so much as with the idea and the magical mantra of its multiplicity, of which textual multiplicity is only one kind.

Having looked at heroic redemption in the ironic mode, and found its expression in story-telling and multiple interpretation in *MC* and *TSV*, I want to shift the terms a bit in discussing *Shame*. This is a novel in which heroism takes on a more sinister cast, despite the ironies that are present in the novel, and has more to do with retribution and nemesis than redemption. There are demonic forces afoot in *Shame*, this time associated with its peculiar heroine, Sufiya Zinobia. In *Shame*, heroes and heroines are also viewed from an ironic perspective, but in a different manner than in either *MC* or *TSV*. The novel pokes fun at ostensible hero-types; Raza Hyder and Iskandar Harrapa both seem cut from hero's cloth in that they are physically and/or politically powerful men who fight for the glory of their country.[46] However, both of them are lampooned in the novel for their petty jealousies and squabbles, and condemned in the end for the atrocities they commit while in power.

Rushdie identifies 'our hero' from the start as the overweight, licentious, rather marginal character: Omar Khayyam. Rushdie's use of Omar Khayyam is ironic throughout the novel; though he repeatedly refers to him as the hero of the story,

> Our hero, Omar Khayyam, first drew breath [...] Dizzy, peripheral, inverted, infatuated, insomniac, stargazing, fat: what manner of hero is this? [...] My sidelined hero [...] I accuse this so-called hero of giving me the most Godawful headache. (20, 25, 71, 142)

Omar Khayyam serves rather to illustrate the futility and mock-necessity of heroes, emphasising their marginality rather than their centrality.[47] The fact that he bears a great poet's name also mocks the Romantic idea of the poet as visionary hero.

Omar Khayyam's counterpart, 'our heroine', is Sufiya Zinobia, Raza Hyder's half-wit daughter, who is the focus of Omar Khayyam's growing obsession, and whom he eventually

marries, and the author-figure/narrator in *Shame* refers to Sufiya Zinobia as 'my poor heroine' (100). While the character of Omar Khayyam is marginally based upon a Pakistani poet-friend of the narrator, Sufiya Zinobia is more profoundly based upon a Pakistani girl the narrator never knew, one who was murdered by her father for bringing 'dishonour' upon the family. The narrator names the girl Anna, and 'Anna, deported, repatriated to a country she had never seen, caught brain-fever and turned into a sort of idiot' (116). Sufiya Zinobia is additionally based on an 'Asian' girl who is set upon and beaten whilst riding the underground. The narrator fantasises that someday this humiliated girl and others like her will learn to 'hit back' with a strange, terrifying and yet liberating power. With this knowledge of her 'predecessors', we might say that Sufiya Zinobia represents a heroine who is part victim and part avenging demon.

It turns out, however, that this characterisation is a 'romantic' ploy. Explaining his decision to make her a half-wit, the narrator confesses, 'I did it to her, I think, to make her pure [...] .idiots are, by definition, innocent. Too romantic a use to make of mental disability?' (120) By pointing out his own appropriation of idiocy as consciously 'romantic', the narrator ironises Sufiya Zinobia's character. She is a half-wit for a reason, i.e. to make her pure, to make her the sort of character who can act on behalf of all who have been accused of 'impurity', whether sexual or racial. Sufiya Zinobia is crafted so as to be the perfect tool of retribution.

I want to focus upon Sufiya Zinobia as being based upon a Romantic idea, because her character can be seen not only as romantic in the sense of generalised romance; Sufiya Zinobia resonates with nineteenth century Romantic ideas about the imagination. When Sufiya Zinobia finally unleashes her power for the first time, we are told that

> Sufiya Zinobia, for so long burdened with being a miracle-gone-wrong, a family's shame made flesh, had discovered in the labyrinths of her unconscious self the hidden path that links *sharam* to violence; and that, awakening, she was as surprised as anyone by the force of what had been unleashed. The beast inside the beauty. (139)

Omar Khayyam speculates that Sufiya Zinobia

> had chosen, she had created the Beast [...] he ruminated [...] It demonstrates the danger of permitting the imagination too free a rein. The rampages of Sufiya Zinobia were the results of a fancy that ran wild. (244)

Sufiya Zinobia *creates within herself* a 'Beast', a demonic avenging entity. Her revenge is seen, significantly in terms of the text's Romantic underpinning, as the product of an overactive imagination, an excess of Romantic fancy. She is subtly compared with Eve, whose 'fancy' also ran wild, leading her in the myth of the Fall to eat the forbidden apple, an action which is often interpreted as an act of self-creation, as it led to self-consciousness.

Significantly, Sufiya Zinobia does not have the same access to the sublimating powers of literary creation and consequent self-creation that the male heroes and/or narrators of Rushdie's work seem to possess. She possesses, or is possessed by, the power of destruction. To express her powers in the novel, Sufiya Zinobia has to go berserk. In Rushdie's male narrators/characters, Satanic powers of imagination, whether in the guise of fiction or self-creation, lead to an ironic brand of redemption; in Sufiya Zinobia, these powers lead to an almost classical notion of retribution, the female nemesis. This is not to say that Sufiya Zinobia belongs to the classical tradition; rather that within the Romantic tradition, the woman as (heroic) creator becomes something monstrous.

In 'My Monster, My Self',[48] Barbara Johnson writes of the Romantic (and gothic) text Frankenstein that it, 'would suggest that a woman's desire to write and a man's desire to give birth

would both be capable only of producing monsters' (Johnson, 1982: 8). A 'usurpation' of creative powers, and the creation of female subjectivity in a world where the only reference to authorial subjectivity is male, are both problematic for the woman in this instance. 'Monstrous' refers to what is in excess of, or Other to the norm of male discourse, and thus in excess of, or Other to, the 'normal' male subjectivity created as a by-product of (authorial) discourse. (In other words the masculine Romantic 'I write, therefore I am' becomes, for a woman in the same context, 'I write, therefore I am a monster'.) Within this paradigm, Sufiya Zinobia's heroism via the imagination is limited to that of the demonic, monstrous Other, although there is one character who manages to create a certain type of discourse without being demonised in the process; Rani Harappa's encoding of the alternative history of Iskander Harappa in her shawls of memory is a subversive act, though as Anuradha Dingwaney Needham points out,[49] it is a minor and relatively private subversion in terms of the novel as a whole.

While Rushdie chooses to illustrate the expression of women's repression in this manner, it is not without its ironic cast. The narrator reveals:

> I had thought, before I began, that what I had on my hands was an almost excessively masculine tale [...] But the women seem to have taken over; they marched in from the peripheries of the story to demand the inclusion of their own tragedies, histories and comedies, obliging me to couch my narrative in all manner of sinuous complexities, to see my 'male' plot refracted, so to speak, through the prisms of its reverse and 'female' side. It occurs to me that the women knew precisely what they were up to--that their stories explain, and even subsume, the men's. Repression is a seamless garment; a society which is authoritarian in its social and sexual codes, which crushes its women beneath the intolerable burdens of honour and propriety, breeds repressions of other kinds as well. Contrariwise: dictators are always--or at least in public, on other people's behalf--puritanical. (173)

The women of the story move from a marginal position to a complementary one to that of the men, perhaps occupying an even more significant position. Rushdie's main point is that the repre-

ssion of women is the foundation upon which other societal repressions are created, however, in this instance, the subject of the 'reverse' 'female' plot becomes *perverse*, i.e. monstrous.

There remains, then, the problem the novel poses, of propagating, despite any ironies that might be present, the myth of the female heroine/creator as monster. Approaching this problem in Rushdie's work is difficult; the character of Sufiya Zinobia both illustrates and aggravates the position of women in a literature that seeks to draw from the romantic. In a more positive vein, we might look at the figure of the monster itself as radical, but there is still the factor of gender to consider. In 'Monsters in Surrealism: Hunting the Human-Headed Bombyx',[50] Elya Adamowicz writes in praise of

> the radical otherness of the monster, on the one hand as a multiple signifying process, and on the other hand *qua* monster [...] With the appearance of the monster hierarchies are abolished, taboos disappear. (Adamowicz, 1990: 298-9)

In terms of avoiding the strictures of identity, this radical otherness might be freeing; in terms of women, however, the monster might just be another problematic essentialist construction of woman-as-Other, however ironically that construction is presented. On the other hand, Sufiya Zenobia does abolish hierarchies (she annihilates ruler and peasant alike), and she is the avenger of women's *sharam*, or shame, and thus could be said to aid in abolishing taboos.

We might also look at other heroine-figures in Rushdie's work, for example, the heroine-figures in *TSV*. Neither Alleluia Cone nor Zeenat Vakil nor Pamela Chamcha are half-wits; as a climber of Everest, Alleluia Cone fits the heroic criterion mentioned by Rushdie in his essay, 'On Adventure. Zeenat Vakil, by contrast, is a political activist, as is (eventually) Saladin Chamcha's ex-wife Pamela. Zeenat Vakil is a strong woman character, but she appears minimally in the

narrative, and is eventually killed in the subsequent novel, *TMLS*. The other two women end up dead, victims of Gibreel Farishta's supernatural delusions. The best that can be said of Rushdie's use of the harem in *TSV* is that it may be satirising the European depiction of the luxurious harem that 'by the Renaissance [...] had become a standard *topos* of European writing about the East' (Teltscher, 1995: 40).[51] Overall, Rushdie's attempt to create heroic women figures fails in a way that illustrates the failure of the Romantic paradigm where women are concerned; women are not traditionally acknowledged as heroes or heroic beings, rather as the *objects* of men's honour and heroism. Even giving an ironic cast to his Romantic tendencies, the best Rushdie seems able to do is Sufiya Zenobia, powerful monster and demonic agent of retribution. This is perhaps not enough to counter the many charges of sexism that have been levelled against him by various critics.[52]

(Male) Monstrosity in the Other Novels

To be entirely fair, it must be pointed out that Rushdie's male characters are often portrayed as monstrous or grotesque in appearance, and images of monstrosity appear frequently in his novels. We have already discussed Saladin Chamcha's metamorphosis into a diabolical figure; Gibreel also becomes a monstrous figure during the riot-scenes in London. Saleem Sinai has horned temples, a grotesquely large nose, and disfiguring birth-marks, and *MC* in particular is rife with images of monstrosity. Caught in the crowd, Amina Sinai observes:

> It's like being surrounded by some terrible monster, a creature with heads and heads and heads; but she corrects herself, no, of course not a monster, these poor poor people--what then? A power of some sort, a force which does not know its strength. (81)

The many-headed monster becomes a constant metaphor for the populations of nations, and Saleem Sinai reports from the womb, 'the many-headed monsters swell inside me' (108). The many-headed monster of the crowd reflects Saleem Sinai's own situation as the conduit of the Midnight Children.

Saleem Sinai seems to feel a certain ambivalence towards this monster; he muses, 'perhaps, if one wishes to remain an individual in the midst of the teeming multitudes, one must make oneself grotesque' (109). Later he tells us,

> the children, despite their wondrously discrete and varied gifts, remained, to my mind, a sort of many-headed monster, speaking in the myriad tongues of Babel; they were the very essence of multiplicity. (229)

Monstrosity here seems to illustrate a tension between the grotesque, incomprehensible, threatening force of any mass of people, and the promise of a utopian multiplicity.

Adamowicz has called the monster 'a hybrid creature' and a 'polymorphous identity' (Adamowicz, 1990: 285 and 299 respectively), emphasising its protean, multiple nature. It is interesting to note that Close calls *Shame* 'a grotesque love story' (Close, 1990: 258), though he does not elaborate upon what he means by this. Overall, the idea of monsters, monstrosity and grotesquery in Rushdie's work indicates the presence of a fissure; a divide exists between the more positive, regenerative conception of multiplicity, hybridity, monstrosity, etc. associated, most prominently, with Bakhtin's notion of the grotesque as we have discussed it in Chapter Two, and the negative aspects of a multiplicity that exists without direction, and is not concerned with the social health of a community.

These latter aspects may actually serve to illustrate the sterile, ironic condition of Bakhtin's Romantic grotesque; here the grotesque (in the form of monstrous multiplicity) is no longer seen

as regenerative for the community. In the Romantic grotesque, laughter is reduced to hollow irony, and characterised by 'an individual carnival, marked by a vivid sense of isolation' (Bakhtin, 1984: 37). The Midnight Children create a carnivalesque Babel within Saleem Sinai's head, and yet he feels isolated from them in terms of his goals and dreams for a better society. The focus of Saleem Sinai's heroism in *MC* is in part a struggle to reconcile the positive and negative aspects, the potentially crippling ironies, of a monstrous multiplicity only interested in individual gain. In Bakhtin's terms, we might see Saleem Sinai's heroic struggle as one which attempts to restore regenerative powers to the Romantic grotesque, despite the negative ironies created by a (grotesque) multiplicity largely unconnected to a sense of community. In this sense, within Bakhtin's terms also, *MC* fulfills a contemporary aesthetic of Romantic Irony.

The Migrant/Hybrid

Before we discuss the idea of the migrant/hybrid in terms of Rushdie's work, it is useful to summarise the issues involved in the invocation of such a term, with regard to post-colonial literature and criticism. The terms 'migrant' and 'hybrid' are often used in conjunction, due to the circumstances which create the hybrid, namely border-crossing (hence migration), both in the world and in the self, and we will discuss more specifically how Rushdie connects these two words later in this section. The migrant/hybrid is both an imaginative construct and a reference to a culturally displaced person, and there are two general views regarding its efficaciousness in post-colonial theory. Post-colonial theorists often praise the term for the simultaneously deconstructive and ameliorative effect it has upon the ability to imagine subjectivity, particularly in

the case of displaced persons; however, often critics remain sceptical as to the ability of the term to either represent the truly displaced, or to evade appropriation by the hegemony. Aijaz Ahmad, for example, sees hybridity as one of three major themes among critics who claim dual allegiances to postmodern and post-colonial perspectives. He feels that while hybridity may posit an alternative to problems of essentialism and authenticity, a distinction needs to be made between the migrant intellectual who may espouse hybridity as a freeing notion, and the culturally displaced who need to espouse what might seem like essentialism and authenticity to preserve their culture.[53] Likewise, George emphasises the importance for the displaced of home as a literal construct, while cautioning against the myth of home,[54] and Ella Shohat feels that there are limitations to the anti-essentialist ethos of hybridity with regard to the situation of 'those communities obliged by circumstances to assert, for their very survival, a lost and even irretrievable past' (Shohat, 1996: 331).[55] Arif Dirlik simply dismisses hybridity as signifying a somewhat colonial relation between first-world critics and The Third World,[56] while Annie E. Coombes suggests that hybridity, although it may to a certain extent be a strategy of opposition, is often 'recuperated by the dominant culture to encapsulate an ahistorical sense of "difference" and "diversity"' (Coombes, 1994: 90).[57]

There are, however, several ways of contextualising hybridity; while Robert Young cautions that the term as a socio-linguistic construct has a racist genealogy, he points to Bakhtin's notion of 'linguistic hybridity' as 'the ability of one voice to ironize and unmask the other within the same utterance' (Young, 1995: 20).[58] He then goes on to connect this duality with Romantic irony, and later identifies Bakhtin's notion of linguistic hybridity as 'a dialectical articulation, as in Rushdie's "mongrelization"' (Young, 1995: 23-24). Close also connects Rushdie's work with

Bakhtin's linguistic hybridity, and sees it as a positive method of articulating the antagonistic clashes between multiple perspectives and ideologies.[59] Shohat feels the term hybridity 'calls attention to the mutual imbrication of "central" and "peripheral" cultures' (Shohat, 1996: 329). We will discuss this imbrication later in relation to Rushdie's work, and how (and where) the concept of the migrant/hybrid might exist in relation to 'centre' and 'margin'.

It is important, however, to stress the interrelation between the 'migrant' and the specifically Romantic notion of the imagination. Spivak notes that the 'migrant' represents 'the constitutive asymmetries of the imagination -- itself a fabricated word' (Spivak, 1993: 109), highlighting the inherent connection between the concept of the migrant and the concept of the imagination. In the discussion that follows, we will trace both the faith and the growing skepticism in Rushdie's work with regard to the migrant/hybrid as a viable construct for expressing imaginative possibility.

Earlier we discussed the tension of identity and difference between the Shadow-Warrior and his shadow as a type of 'migrant sensibility'. The migrant could be partially characterised as a Shadow Warrior, a being constantly required to 'translate' its inherent multiplicity and otherness, often across cultural borders. In his writings, Rushdie repeatedly defines certain characteristics present in the migrant, foremost that the migrant is a hybrid, consisting of different cultural and temporal fragments. Rushdie's definition of the migrant yields various products, from emigrants to would-be writers, but the principle that seems to drive all these variations is one of migration. In his essay, 'Günter Grass',[60] Rushdie writes,

> migration also offers us one of the richest metaphors of our age. The very word *metaphor*, with its roots in the Greek words for *bearing across*, describes a sort of migration, the migration of ideas into images. Migrants--borne-across humans--

> are metaphorical beings in their very essence; and migration, seen as a metaphor, is everywhere around us. We all cross frontiers; in that sense, we are all migrant peoples. (279)

Here Rushdie identifies all human beings as migrants, via the linguistic construct of the metaphor. We are all borne across, translated into images and into the words that constitute images. What Rushdie wishes to formulate reaches even beyond freedom of speech; he views the essence of human nature as an act of linguistic migration. The freedom to engage in that movement without penalty approximates the subject's freedom to negotiate its 'whereabouts', its relationship(s) with the social bodies that give meaning to language.

The idea of migrant-as-metaphor also contains interesting implications in light of what Paul Ricoeur has termed the '*tensional*' model of metaphor as resemblance,[61] such that resemblance itself must be understood as a tension between identity and difference; *'metaphor is defined in terms of movement'* (Ricoeur, 1986: 246), i.e. 'from' something 'to' something else. Ricoeur contends that the meaning of metaphor may be found in the copula of the verb '*to be*'. (Ricoeur, 1986: 306) The tension he identifies within metaphor is one wherein metaphor '*is not*', and '*is like*' the object for which it is a metaphor. In other words, the imaginative move of constructing a metaphor consists of moving from the 'similar' to the 'dissimilar'; Ricoeur further posits that 'imagination [has] something to do with the conflict between identity and difference' (Ricoeur, 1986: 199). On a macrocultural level this tensional model of metaphor is reflected in the figure of the migrant; as we have noted, the migrant embodies the notion of movement, and by virtue of its forced movement, constantly oscillates between identity and otherness. Dissimilar 'otherness' becomes familiar, similar to the migrant's condition of continuing dispossession. The migrant exists only insofar as it constantly moves away from itself (i.e. is *not* itself, or is *different*

from itself); it is a being which finds its identity not in itself, but rather, in its continuity of *movement* (i.e. its likeness to movement).

To return to the migrant-self as a linguistic construct, the idea of self-as-linguistic-construct may be viewed in at least two ways; firstly, when focused externally, this idea may result in the possibility of community. In his essay entitled "'Commonwealth Literature" Does Not Exist',[62] Rushdie argues that writers may find their common ground to be 'international, and based on imaginative affinities' (70). These 'imaginative affinities' allow the formation of a community, significantly of writers, through a common connection to an imaginative language that transcends the limitations of individual national cultures; such a scenario evokes a continuing sense of Romantic faith in the writer who acts as a synthesising agent by producing a communal narrative. When this self--a simultaneous creator and creation of language--turns its bearings inward, however, it finds a centre that 'cannot hold'. A different kind of migration takes place; the self realises its fragmentation when it becomes 'a traveller across borders in the self, and in Time' (280), as Rushdie writes in 'Günter Grass'. The self is divided not only by the presence of multiple cultures, but by its migration from the past to the present, from old self to new self. This migratory realisation recurs throughout Rushdie's fiction. Just as Saleem Sinai in *MC* claims to contain a multitude of selves, Saladin Chamcha in *TSV* reflects upon 'the conflicting selves jostling and joggling within these bags of skin' (519).

In general, this conflict is a positive factor for Rushdie, who favours the novel because, as he writes in 'Is Nothing Sacred?', it is the only art 'that takes the 'privileged arena' of conflicting discourses right inside our heads. The interior space of our imagination is a theatre that can never be closed down' (426). Through the language and imagery of (in this case) the novel or text, we

internalise argument and conflict. Each different point of view represents a border to be crossed within the self, by means of an imaginative move. Under this scheme of thought, the novelist and the reader qualify as migrants, but one could equally argue that anyone who has ever tried to understand another point of view might be classed as a migrant.

In one sense, the migrant is a purely narrative construct, a marker of the imaginative move from world to text, and vice-versa. In fact, the migrant self has much in common with narrative; it provides an arena for the synthesis of cultural fragments, while providing a forum for argument and imaginative possibility. As we noted earlier, in 'Is Nothing Sacred?', Rushdie discusses Foucault's observation that authors came into being when discourse became transgressive, and concludes that the origin of the novel is by its very essence autonomous, individuating, and subversive. Rushdie attempts to reconstruct these qualities in the migrant, whose subversive powers lie in the ability to transgress boundaries. Beyond this, he attempts to imbue the migrant with a certain autonomy through imagination, claiming that, 'The migrant intellect roots itself in itself, in its own capacity for imagining and reimagining the world' (280). Here, in a move reminiscent of the Romantic artist's use of imagination, the migrant provides its own point of imaginative origin, finding its identity through the function of the imaginative act.

At the same time that Rushdie would like to claim to be a migrant, however, he remains adamantly rooted in Indian culture. He rationalises this by attributing the characteristics of the migrant to the Indian writer in particular. In the essay 'Imaginary Homelands', Rushdie claims that the Indian writer is analogous to a fragmented mirror, enriched by a multiplicity of viewpoints. A comic version of this can be seen in the lyrics of the song Gibreel Farishta sings in *TSV* as he falls from the sky:

'O, my shoes are Japanese [...]
These trousers English, if you please
On my head, red Russian hat;
My heart's Indian for all that'. (5)

The Indian writer as such is subject to polycultural influences, yet in 'Imaginary Homelands', Rushdie considers his narrative to be reflective of 'the Indian talent for non-stop self-regeneration' (16). This is the same talent he claims as characteristic of the migrant intellect; as a 'migrant individual', Rushdie can only identify with a group he has already constructed as hybrid and fragmentary.

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said advocates the concept of the intellectual migrant as a strategy of resistance to post-colonial imperialist ideology.[63] Both Rushdie and Said view the concept of the migrant as important; it will be useful to examine similarities and differences in their definition of that term, and to understand in what ways migrancy and migration might be seen as an empowering strategy for the individual. Rushdie utilises the phrase 'migrant sensibility' in his essay 'The Location of Brazil';[64]

> The [development of] the migrant sensibility [...] [is] one of the central themes of this century of displaced persons [...] The effect of mass migration has been the creation of radically new types of human being: people who have been obliged to define themselves--because they are so defined by others--by their otherness; people in whose deepest selves strange fusions occur, unprecedented unions between what they were and where they find themselves. The migrant suspects reality: having experienced several ways of being, he understands their illusory nature. To see things plainly, you have to cross a frontier [...] Migrants must, of necessity, make a new imaginative relationship with the world, because of the loss of familiar habitats [...] [Migrants are] the plural, hybrid, metropolitan result of such imaginings. (124-125)

Here again is an obsession with movement; migrants are defined by the fact of migration, and by alienation: their movement causes them to be outsiders, to be Other. Because of their awareness

of the 'illusory' nature of the world, Rushdie associates migrants with an imaginative sensibility, and highlights the migrant's ability to recreate the world through imaginative acts. As the Other, the migrant must constantly reinvent an identity for itself. This focus on imaginative self-creation can be seen as both Romantic and ironic; through imagination, the culturally displaced create for themselves an identity of their own, but this identity is based on the phenomenon of their exile, and on their otherness.

Rushdie emphasises the plurality of cultural experience, but beyond this he advocates a plural self which he describes as a 'hybrid'. Significantly, the terms used to describe the hybrid self refer to cohesion and synthesis, rather than the splitting associated with fission; the hybrid is a multiplicity of self which exists by virtue of fusing and marrying its many parts together. The word hybrid is an interesting concept in this context, meant to convey a sense of the intercultural influences within the self, rather than the sense of discrete cultures we get with the terms poly- or multi-culturality. The move from multi-cultural to intercultural involves a turning inward, away from an external sense of culture toward an internal blending of cultural elements, 'strange fusions' rather than close encounters. For Rushdie, the self is 'rooted in ideas rather than places', dispossessed of everything *but* the ideas of places, ideas which are inevitably pluralised and hybridised within the migrant individual. This hybridisation is similar to a narrative process that would employ the plurality of argument to synthesise cultural fragments. The migrant utilises this notion of narrative synthesis to imagine a coherent self; the construction of the migrant self may thus be contextualised as a strategy for individual empowerment, in the face of an often debilitating sense of fragmentation.

Said sees the migrant's hybrid nature as inherently able to resist strategies of imperialism

that seek first to marginalise and then to subjugate cultures and peoples. Said believes intellectuals should strive to become hybrids, migrants who are so equally alienated from each place that the mentality of colonisation becomes psychologically impossible.[65] Said tends to view the migrant as an exile, but he is swift to point out in a conversation with Salman Rushdie that, 'In the case of the Palestinians, exile is a mass phenomenon: it is the mass that is exiled and not just the [literary] bourgeoisie' (171).[66] Said's view of the migrant self is close in points to Rushdie's, not surprising when one remembers that both have made a conscious commitment to a humanist approach that focuses on the subjectivity of human experience. (28) In *Orientalism*, Said identifies himself as a:

> ''humanist', a title which indicates the humanities as my field [...] no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances'. (Said, 1978: 9, 11)

Though both seem to show a commitment to the idea of the self as a subject, both Rushdie and Said emphasise the fact that the fragmentation caused by migrancy creates profound difficulties in matters of cultural identity and personal history.

Significantly, both Rushdie and Said view the role that narrative plays in issues of identity and self-creation as crucial; Said writes,

> narrative is crucial to my argument here, my basic point being that stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history [...] Nations themselves *are* narrations. (Said, 1978: 29)

Like Rushdie, Said stresses that individuals and nations are products of stories: their own and other people's. We see this idea occurring in Okri's work, as well, as we shall discuss in Chapter

Four; Said's comment highlights what both Rushdie and Okri emphasise in their work, namely the idea that only the imagination can counter the oppressive narratives of a culture, by creating new, transformative narratives to set against them.

Rushdie himself professes an affinity with Said; in 'On Palestinian Identity: A Conversation With Edward Said', Rushdie refers to several questions that Said has previously posed, and which he strongly identifies with:

> '"What happens to landless people? However you exist in the world, what do you preserve of yourselves? What do you abandon?" I find one passage particularly valuable, as it connects with many things I have been thinking about. "Our truest reality" [Said] writes, "is expressed in the way we cross over from one place to another. We are migrants and perhaps hybrids, in but not of any situation in which we find ourselves. This is the deepest continuity of our lives as a nation in exile and constantly on the move"'. (171)

As with Rushdie, Said asks how a culturally displaced individual can root itself; he finds a similar answer in the notion of movement. For Rushdie, the migrant/hybrid roots itself in itself, and for Said the migrant finds continuity and hence an identity in its own characteristics of movement and exile. Rushdie also enquires into the process of intercultural influence as it affects the notion of reality; for the narrator of Rushdie's *Shame*, there are only imagined histories:

> When individuals become unstuck from their native land, they are called migrants [...] We have floated upwards from history, from memory, from Time [...] As for me: I, too, like all migrants, am a fantasist. I build imaginary countries and try to impose them on the ones that exist. I, too, face the problem of history: what to retain, what to dump, how to hold on to what memory insists on relinquishing. (86-7)

Rushdie worries about the erasures that accompany any telling of history; in *Shame*, the narrator relates that 'All stories are haunted by the ghost of stories they might have been' (116). Because historical uncertainty is one of their defining components, these stories are located on the margins

of 'history' and 'reality', both of which privilege narrative certainty. For Rushdie, these ghost stories are the stories of 'migrant selves', insofar as these selves are products of living at the margins of history and reality.

Such ghost stories, however, have the power within their proliferations and hybridisations to subsume the 'centre', in this case an oppressive sense of what history or literature should be. Rushdie turns to the notion of a migrant imagination to envision a literary historical collage that embodies and inhabits both the 'margin' and the 'centre'. In *Shame*, it is this dual habitation which allows Rushdie to 'hold on' to a notion of Pakistan and to understand the nature of shame, whilst simultaneously evoking a sense of cultural relativity. But dual habitation with regard to cultures also implies a partial dispossession from each place. We can view this simultaneous dual habitation/partial dispossession as another kind of hybridisation; it involves negotiating both culturally and historically determined factors, and the potential for cultural and historical indeterminacy, the freedom to imagine things as they *might* be.

The fusion of these two camps can perhaps be viewed as the marriage of 'reality' and 'fiction'. 'Reality' might refer to that which is based on notions of historical determinacy, and 'fiction' as that which is based on historical indeterminacy, or the fluidity of stories which subvert, revise, or fantasise historical material. Certainly, as Hutcheon has observed, Rushdie's fiction can be regarded as a prime example of historiographic metafiction.[67] For Rushdie, fiction, or telling stories, cannot be separated from the process of hybridisation, and this includes the hybridisation of historical 'reality'. The heroine of *Shame* is a hybrid of three 'real' people whose personal histories have deeply affected Rushdie's narrator. He shares with us the 'inside information' that the first girl (Anna), killed by her father to appease a sense of shame:

> became a ghost, and I realized that to write about her, about shame, I would have to go back East, to let the idea breathe its favourite air. Anna, deported, repatriated to a country she had never seen, caught brain-fever and turned into a sort of idiot. (116)

If we regard this first girl, Anna, as an incarnation of the mind which is determined by culture, it makes sense that her translation to a 'country she had never seen' causes her mind to dis-integrate. The 'English' mind of Anna is repatriated, but in its new context, separated from the culture that shaped it, that mind simply does not compute.

The mind of Anna is combined with the body of an Asian super-woman, and Rushdie tells us, 'The last ghost inside my heroine is male, a boy [who...] simply ignited of his own accord [...] We are energy; we are fire; we are light. Finding the key, stepping through into that truth, a boy began to burn' (117). If Anna is the mind, and the Asian girl the body, this image of truth and light and fire could be regarded as an incarnation of spirit. The finished product is an empowered figure, Sufiya Zenobia, but that figure's agency finds its full strength only in the hybrid; the mind of Anna, the body of an Asian super-woman, and finally the spirit of the boy who spontaneously combusts; all intermingle to create the heroine of *Shame*.

Said and Rushdie are both reluctant to relinquish a discrete, individual sense of self, especially in the face of cultural dispossession: in *Shame*, the borders of Rushdie's narrator's self are intact, even if that self is deconstructed by virtue of its being a hybrid, or multiple in nature. (We might view Saleem Sinai, and his obsession with his own fissuring, as another way in which the individual subject is deconstructed in Rushdie's work.) And while Rushdie maintains that his heroine is a hybrid of three different individuals, she is in fact a metaphor for the individual itself. In this respect, insofar as a belief in individual agency and selfhood resides at the core of Western

liberal humanism, Rushdie's fiction would seem to reify the 'centre'. Upon closer inspection, however, this is not the case; Rushdie's version of the centre is inundated with 'margins', and centred only around a continuing faith in the imaginative powers of the individual, a faith that often finds expression in Rushdie's novels as a belief in love.

TSV remains the novel by Rushdie that most directly addresses the problematical issue of faith and belief, and does so significantly in terms of the migrant. Saladin Chamcha has forsaken India for England, in whose culture he finds a new origin and new faith, as a substitute for his Indian roots. Gibreel Farishta is another who has lost faith in love and dreams, and this proves to be his downfall. Of the two, as Rushdie highlights in the essay, 'In Good Faith' (in *IH*), 'Chamcha survives. He makes himself whole by returning to his roots and, more importantly, by facing up to, and learning to deal with, the great verities of love and death' (398). Chamcha survives because *he learns to have faith in love, while negotiating his own hybrid past.* In a moment of crisis and reevaluation, Saladin Chamcha reflects upon:

> Love, a zone in which nobody desirous of compiling a human (as opposed to robotic, Skinnerian-android) body of experience could afford to shut down operations [...] Of the things of the mind, he had most loved the protean, inexhaustible culture of the English-speaking peoples. (397-8)

Chamcha's love encompasses the protean hybridity of English-speaking peoples and cultures, and the passage suggests that our loves are what make us human. Close deems *TSV* 'a novel about the ecstasies and risks of [...] the transcendent, love' (Close, 1990: 260). For Rushdie, both love and hybridisation are vital to humans if they are to exist and adapt; both play a vital role in formulating narratives of self-creation, especially for the Others who must find their affinities and loves, their sacred and transcendent moments, among the fragments of culture.[68]

As we discussed earlier, narratives of self-creation are also intertwined with narratives of literary creation. The otherness Rushdie has used to identify the migrant reappears in his conception of literature, the secular Other to the sacred text. In 'Is Nothing Sacred', Rushie writes,

> the acceptance that all that is solid has melted into air, that reality and morality are not givens but imperfect human constructs, is the point from which fiction begins. This is what J.-F. Lyotard called, in 1979, *La Condition Postmoderne*. The challenge of literature is to start from this point, and still find a way of fulfilling our unaltered spiritual requirements [...] Literature is, of all the arts, the one best suited to challenging absolutes of all kinds; and, because it is in its origin the schismatic Other of the sacred (and authorless) text, so it is also the art most likely to fill our god-shaped holes. (IH 422, 424)

The challenge of literature for Rushdie involves a challenge to absolutes, or as Lyotard terms it, totalising 'grand narratives', but literature also finds its purpose in finding non-totalising ways of fulfilling our spiritual needs, the need for faith and transcendent experience. When faith becomes a human rather than a divine matter, creation becomes self-creation, an attempt to fill our 'god-shaped holes'.

The need for faith and the need for self-creation are thus two aspects of the same problem, i.e. how to respond in a secular manner to the impulse for the sacred. In *TSV*, Rushdie's narrator notes that,

> A man who sets out to make himself up is taking on the Creator's role, according to one way of seeing things; he's unnatural, a blasphemer, an abomination of abominations. From another angle, you could see pathos in him, heroism in his struggle, in his willingness to risk: not all mutants survive. Or, consider him sociopolitically: most migrants learn [...] to counter the falsehoods invented about us. (49)

The role of human creator is a Romantic one, the individual as hero, the 'profanity' of self-creation within the tradition of the sacred. Similarly, such self-creation may be regarded within a

sociopolitical context, as a counter to 'falsehoods' propagated by racial prejudice.

Modes of self-creation are explored in the novel, and hybridity is seen as the solution to the problem of radical discontinuity. The narrator of *TSV* wonders if Gibreel and Saladin may be:

> two fundamentally different *types* of self [...] Gibreel [who was...] *continuous*--that is, joined to and arising from his past; [who...] chose neither near-fatal illness nor transmuting fall [...] in point of fact, he fears above all things the altered states in which his dreams leak into, and overwhelm, his waking self [...] whereas Saladin Chamcha is a creature of *selected* discontinuities, a *willing* re-invention; his preferred revolt against history. (427)

Gibreel's inability to sever himself from a continuous past will prove his spiritual downfall; he can access neither his near-death experience nor the 'fortunate fall' from which he emerges changed. He denies the transmutation, and fears these altered, transcendent dream-states, the states in which imagination might be said to most strongly manifest. Saladin Chamcha, on the other hand, mirrors Rushdie's own preference for 'selected discontinuities', and 'willing re-invention', which is seen in opposition to history. 'Selected' and 'willing' unfailingly emphasise human choice and agency, the human will to both destroy and recreate narratives about self and world, and it is no coincidence that Chamcha survives; his is the successful narrative of the hybrid self.

Despite his advocacy of hybridity, the need for an origin, a root, is for Rushdie inescapable. His character Saladin Chamcha takes hope from a television programme which offers a possibility that the hybrid might root itself:

> On *Gardeners' World*, [Chamcha] was shown how to achieve something called a 'chimeran graft' [...] a chimera with roots, firmly planted in and growing vigorously out of a piece of English earth: a tree, he thought, capable of taking the metaphoric place of the one his father had chopped down in a distant garden in another, incompatible world. If such a tree were possible, then so was he; he, too, could cohere, send down roots, survive. Amid all the televisual images of hybrid tragedies [...] he was given this one gift. (406)

The passage highlights that the migrant, too, is a metaphor for the mixing of cultures; Chamcha finds hope in the concept of a hybrid tree in a garden, a tree which is symbolic of roots and origins. The garden might equally be Chamcha senior's garden, or the Garden of Eden: to be a migrant is to eat of the tree of self-knowledge, i.e. it is to know that, although in one sense the self is merely a construct of language/narrative, it still requires a sense of faith and love, and the 'roots' of a personal history.

On the negative side, the project of the migrant self, while it presents an intriguing notion of subjectivity, holds the danger of being a seductive academic and/or artistic theory which proves disempowering on a concrete level of application. Said's alienation-theory presents difficulties for those who need to identify themselves politically within a context of solidarity. In the same vein, one wonders if Salman Rushdie's vision of the migrant is restricted to the artist or writer whose domain lies within the imagination. With regard to the idea of the migrant, it is probably useful to retain the constructs of centre and margin; when applied to cultural and political situations, they may provide external 'compass-headings' for the intercultural individual who must negotiate between various personal influences. Ideas of the centre and the margin may also hold the key to utilising the concept of the migrant both within and beyond the context of the intellectual or the imaginative. By holding on to notions of the centre and the margin as they exist *within* the self, the individual is forced to acknowledge both its 'colonisation' and its political positioning. In using the term 'centre' within this context, I refer to the idea that the 'individual' is a construct of the centre, i.e. it is a notion of self that is largely Western (of the 'centre') in origin, and a notion of self that possesses a sense of interior depth. The 'migrant individual' as such is constantly negotiating the position between its own centrality as a self, and the margins which form its

unique character (in Rushdie's words, its 'Otherness').

Because of its emphasis on individuality rather than gender, another aspect of the migrant and the migrant sensibility that should be considered is how it might be compatible with feminist theories. One is tempted to think of Virginia Wolf's *Orlando*, whose eponymous main character might be regarded as a hybrid, traversing both different cultures and different genders. In the conclustion, we will go on to speculate about connections between post-colonial constructions of hybridity/migrancy and feminist theories of love that invoke ideas of hybridity. The concept of the migrant must also be considered in relation to material circumstances; aside from imaginative products, one must ask how psychological migrancy is related to physical migrancy. The migrant must not be confused with the forced emigrant, whose material needs do not disappear simply because the artist or the academic has new visions of subjectivity. One must ask how and if those visions could be applied outside the contexts within which they were imagined.

It would be wrong to identify migrancy as a revolutionary means of transcending cultural and political differences. Rushdie's focus on a kind of Romantic transcendence, however, can be seen as a political strategy. Though Romantic transcendence itself is admittedly problematic, it may hold within it a potentially revolutionising power. As Hayden White notes in *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*,[69] 'Romance is fundamentally a drama of self-identification, symbolized by the hero's transcendence of the world of experience, his victory over it, and his final liberation [from experience]' (White, 1973: 8). The idea of the migrant, with its mode of ironic self-identification through its otherness, could prove to be liberating; it might be possible to subvert oppressive notions of history and experience via a transcendent, narrative synthesis of 'dispossessed parts'. White discusses Marx's proletariat as a

'refuse' that knows itself as such, and 'hence is rendered cosmopolitan and classless [...] is a genuinely revolutionary class, the class that solves "the riddle of history"' (White, 1973: 314). Rushdie has described the migrant as 'cosmopolitan', and indeed, the migrant is defined in part by the ironic self-awareness of its otherness, its dispossession. It remains to be seen if the migrant, by transcending this dispossession, will solve 'the riddle of history'.

The areas of gender and cultural materialism are only a few that might provide some interesting fusions with the notion of migrancy in the future. One must not divorce the migrant from its historical context, in Said as a solution to the problem of multi-nationalism, and in Rushdie as a response to interculturality and an ensuing crisis of individualism. It is equally important not to confuse the imaginative project of the migrant with the material circumstances of disenfranchised groups, but rather seek out in each case how, if at all, the notion of the migrant might prove empowering to individuals and/or their specific groups.

Romantic Evolutions and Regressions in *The Moor's Last Sigh*

I have given Rushdie's most recent novel a heading of its own because I believe it marks both a shift in his opinions about hybridity, and a continuation and a complication of his engagement with Romantic themes; in particular, we will explore in his novel the Oedipal dynamic of the Romantic sublime and the search for the lost mother, and how the figure of Satan recurs in relation to the figure of the artist in the novel. We will also discuss how ideas of redemptive romantic love, Romantic nationalism, and the threat of apocalypse manifest in the novel, and how these relate, with the exception of romantic love, to an increasingly pessimistic view of hybridity.

TMLS is the tale of Moraies Zogoiby (Moor), descendant of Vasco de Gama and scion of

a family whose spice empire eventually becomes the cover for a major drug cartel in India. The novel charts Moor's search for a lost portrait of his artist-mother Aurora, which has been painted over by Vasco Miranda and turned into a picture entitled 'The Moor's Last Sigh'; the trope of the novel is thus the Romantic search for the lost mother.[70]

How the Romantic artist encounters a sublime (M)other Nature is complicated in this novel by virtue of the fact that Aurora, 'the blooming morning' (5), both represents the main figure of the artist and the main figure for nature in the novel. However, as a narrator who spends the duration of the novel writing the story of his life and leaving it chapter by chapter to be found and read, Moor might be regarded as an author-figure, and as we shall discuss, he is also described as a Satanic figure in the novel. Our examination of the relationship between Aurora and Moor will highlight how the dynamic of the Romantic sublime is problematised and ironised in the novel; we will question, however, whether in the end Rushdie manages to solve the problematical gender issues attached to the Romantic sublime, or merely repeat them in a slightly different form. We will also discuss the novel's stance on romantic love, hybridity, and the connection between Luis Vaz de Camoens' epic romance about Vasco da Gama, *The Lusiads*, and the novel's satire of the character Camoens' political, nationalist leanings.

The latter theme represents a humorously ironic satire on nationalism, and further enhances the Romantic tenor of the novel; Camoens' 'favourite poets were all English' (32), and his reading material significantly includes works by Carlyle and Shelley, and he 'had enjoyed discussing Wordsworth's views on the French Revolution, Coleridge's "Kubla Khan"' (32). He is 'named after a poet and possessed of a dreamy nature' (10), and his aspirations to revolutionise India are as doomed as the revolutionary political hopes of the English Romantics before him.

Camoens expounds 'the virtues of nationalism' (18), but his attempt to train a troupe of itinerant Lenins to spread the visionary doctrine of an anti-colonialist Communism results in ridiculous political farce. His attempts are especially ironic with regard to the intertextuality of *The Lusiads*, wherein Camoens attempts to revive the glorious history of Portuguese colonialism. It is also significant, however, that the epic is famed for its scene on the Isle of Love in Canto Nine, and its strong suggestion that love is the gods' most appropriate reward for heroes; we will discuss the importance of love in *TMLS* later in this chapter. What the farcical Lenins also highlight is that a nationalist agenda based on imported ideas of Marxist-Leninist philosophy is always already internationalist; the application of these ideas within the context of Indian politics results in a kind of political hybridity.

Whereas the novel's Camoens finds himself cloistered in the de Gama stronghold of Cabral Island, which is described as 'serpented, Edenic-infernal', it is Moor himself who resembles the figure of the artist as Satan. It is particularly useful to examine how Moor is portrayed as a Satanic figure in the novel, before describing his relationship with his mother Aurora. Vasco Miranda tells Moor, "'To be the offspring of our daemonic Aurora [...] is to be, truly, a modern Lucifer [...] Son of the blooming morning'" (5). Moor himself admits, 'the day came when I was indeed hurled from that fabulous garden, and plunged towards Pandaemonium'. Notably, Aurora the artist is described as 'daemonic', but in the novel it is Moor who assumes the Satanic role we usually associate with the Romantic artist. In further support of this, Moor's dream late in the novel indicates how important the imagination is to him, and how closely he is thus associated with the figure of the Romantic artist. In 'a sea-dream' which shows him that he is his 'mother's son' (290), he finds himself in 'a lightless subterranean flow' where a shrouded woman instructs

him '*to swim beyond the limit of my breath* [to] the one and only shore upon which I might be safe for ever, *the shore of Fancy itself*' (290). Moor's dream of a womb-like underground waterway, in which a mother-figure directs him to pass a limit-point and emerge on 'the shore of Fancy' is reminiscent of how Weiskel describes the Romantic sublime as a movement towards the 'beyond' by the poet, and Fancy, as we noted when we discussed Rushdie's use of the word in *TSV*, has been traditionally associated with the feminine. An earlier, more threatening version of this sublime mother-figure appears in *TSV*; reminiscent of Mother in *PNE*, the female terrorist wears her 'grenades like extra breasts' and speaks in a 'faint oceanic voice' (81).

Unlike the Romantic artist-hero, however, Moor does not represent this oceanic nature artistically; he is, in a manner of speaking, and in an ironic inversion of the Oedipal subject-object dynamic that typifies the Romantic sublime, *represented by 'nature'*, i.e. Aurora often utilises Moor as the subject of her paintings. Their mother-son relationship is used as a vehicle in the novel to express the bleaker aspects of imaginative, artistic endeavours; in her Moor paintings, Aurora documents the erosion of hope in fragmentation and hybridity as a positive means of constructing personal and social identity. Artistic self-creation, and the plurality associated with the hybrid, no longer hold forth the hope of a secular redemption.

To understand the role Aurora plays in the novel, we must both analyse her artistic project and her allegorical role as 'the mother of us all' (160). In *TMLS*, Aurora represents the figure of the Romantic artist; she sees herself 'as hero and heroine combined' (247) in her project to reimagine India in a similar manner to Rushdie's own 'epic-fabulist manner' (124), in 'the mythic-romantic mode in which history, family, politics and fantasy jostled each other' (203). Like the Romantic artist, Aurora seeks 'to transcend and redeem [the world's] imperfections through art'

(220). Her pictures tend toward the 'apocalyptic', and her first 'Moor' picture is 'an attempt to create a romantic myth of the plural, hybrid nation [...] using Arab Spain to re-imagine India' (227). Even Aurora's critics enter into the Romantic spirit of the novel; they are 'the tigers of the critical fraternity, burning bright and with fearful symmetry' (261). Rushdie continually emphasises the Romantic dimension of Aurora's aesthetic, particularly in connection with how she attempts to reenvision the nation in a hybrid mode. In her art, she attempts to ironise the traditional conception of the nation-state by presenting the nation as a fragmented palimpsest, and in the process, explores the notion of the nation as a mother.

As the narrator and others in the novel note, motherhood is a significant idea within Indian culture: 'Motherness [...] is a big idea in India, maybe our biggest: the land as mother, the mother as land [...] "Sublimation [...] of mutual parent-child longings, is deep-rooted in the national psyche"' (137, 138). Mother India is:

> idealised as bride, mother, and producer of sons; long-suffering, stoical, loving, redemptive, and conservatively wedded to the maintenance of the status quo. But for Bad Birju, cast out from his mother's love [...] she becomes an aggressive, treacherous, annihilating mother who haunts the fantasy life of Indian males. (139)

The Oedipal complex that defines the dynamic of the Romantic sublime is also the dynamic of the 'national psyche', and within it (as the narrator notes, and as we discussed in Chapter One) the mother functions in a conservative capacity to preserve the status quo of the nation-state. Aurora's vision of the mother is an ironic counter-representation; 'an alternate vision of India-as-mother [...] of cities, as heartless and lovable, brilliant and dark, multiple and lonely, mesmeric and repugnant, pregnant and empty [...] as the [...] metropolis itself' (204). Instead of the land, Aurora depicts the mother as a city which is both nurturing and hostile.

It is interesting to note that concerning *MC*, Kane criticises Rushdie for assuming 'a romantic relationship to the body of the subcontinent. India acts as the scene of erotic desire and its disappointment, a topos of the imperial romance' (Kane, 1996: 97) -- a romance that posits a subject-object relationship between the coloniser and the body of the subcontinent. The parallels between the 'imperial romance' and the Romantic sublime are obvious, and there is further evidence to connect the two. Booker suggests that *TSV* may contain a version of the Oedipus myth,[71] and this gains further resonance in *TMLS*; in 'Salman Rushdie Talks to the London Consortium About *The Satanic Verses*', Rushdie admits that in *TMLS* he incorporates the 'myth of the nation' represented by Mother India, and its 'suppressed incest theme' (McCabe, 1996: 54).

In the novel, the 'unhealthy', Oedipal relationship between mother and son (be it the relationship between Aurora and Moor, Indira and Sanjay Ghandi, or Mother India/Nargis and Birju/Sunil Dutt) reflects a larger, national malaise; (301-303): when Moor finds another lover, Aurora's paintings become progressively darker and more pessimistic. Moor's

> previous metaphorical rôle as a unifier of opposites, a standard-bearer of pluralism, ceasing to stand as a symbol -- however approximate -- of the new nation, and being transformed, instead, into a semi-allegorical figure of decay [...] The ideas of impurity, cultural admixture and mélange which had been, for most of her creative life, the closest things she had found to a notion of the Good, were in fact capable of distortion, and contained a potential for darkness as well as for light. This "black Moor" was a new imagining of the idea of the hybrid [...] of evil. (301-3)

Here we begin to see how this worsening mother-son relationship allegorically mirrors a more pessimistic view of hybridity; the hybrid/migrant sensibility which has played such an optimistic part in Rushdie's earlier works now seems capable of 'distortion' into 'evil'. Thus Bombay is 'no longer the city of mixed-up mongrel joy' (376), and the novel sees little hope in notions of

plurality when plurality can be used to swindle and propagate fakery on a national scale. As Moor notes, 'the only limit to the money that could be made was the boundary of your imagination' (182), and the novel depicts how the techniques used in the imaginative recreation of the self lead in this case only to more inventive modes of capitalism.

Correspondingly, the idea of plurality found in the number 1,001 also transmogrifies into a bleak vision of the future; Moor finds himself 'falling to earth, not as myself, but as a thousand and one fragmented images of myself, trapped in shards of glass' (279). Even a cabbie's curse reflects this pessimism, and the dissolution of a once-hopeful fragmentation: 'May you stay lost in this infernal maze [...] for a thousand nights and a night' (389). Rupture and dislocation, formerly viewed as positive modes of migration, are here drained of possibility; 'life is a series of brutal ruptures, falling upon our defenceless heads like the blows of a woodman's axe' (391). In this dire condition of fragmentation without synthesis, Moor reflects upon the futility of finding a way back to his 'roots', his origins: 'All my ties had loosened [...] I had reached [...] not a home, but an away. A place that did not bind, but dissolved' (388). The otherness of the hybrid, of the migrant, is here portrayed as defeated and frustrated.

In the face of this defeat, Moor searches for the lost portrait of his mother, entering into a Romantic quest for, if not wholeness, then the representation of wholeness.[72] Though the mother is 'beyond recall' (432), she still represents an essential truth and unity, what Jean-Pierre Durix has noted with reference to *Shame* as, 'The world of the origins -- the "mother's" land or the field of the imagination' (Durix, 1984: 462),[73] thus equating the quest for the Mother with a quest for imaginative expression. In *TMLS*, the lost mother is a symbol for originary truth; Moor wonders, 'How, trapped as we were in [...] fakery [...] the fancy-dress [...] the superficial, could

we have penetrated to the full, sensual truth of the lost mother below?' (184-85) All hope of being reunited with the mother/India is dashed, but it is significant that Moor's nostalgic hope of being reunited with his origin, be it his mother or his country, survives. The de Gama men yearn for their mother; Francisco and Camoens both commit suicide by swimming 'out to the mother-ocean' (67). For Moor, despite his turbulent relationship between himself and Aurora, the mother is still perceived as a 'full, sensual truth [...] below' the artificial surface of fragmentation; this perception reveals how deeply embroiled the novel remains in an unreconstructed Romantic aesthetic as far as the figure of the mother is concerned.

Though the quest for the lost mother is doomed to failure, the one enduring hope of redemption the novel does offer is the idea of romantic love, despite its potential failures, carnages and betrayals. In *MC*, for Aadam Aziz, love 'filled up the hole inside him which had been created' (27-28) after he gave up religion, and in *TMLS*, romantic love contains the same possibility for transcendence as does religion. Reminiscent of Breton and of Angela Carter's invocation of Breton, in *TMLS* the character Aires has an 'amour fou' for Prince Henry the Navigator, while Aurora and Abraham Zogoiby have 'a terrible love'. Describing his parents' first time making love together, Moor exclaims, 'Mad love! that transcendent fuck' (89), and Aurora's 'naked body [...] inspired in [Abraham] a kind of religious awe' (99). Later unspeakably corrupted, while his love for Aurora lasts, Abraham meditates how 'even if the world's beauty and love were on the edge of destruction, theirs would still be the only side to be on' (101). Love becomes the only positive version of hybridity left in the novel; Moor notes how 'the boundaries of your self began to dissolve [...] in love' (193). It thus holds out the same hope of self-redemption that previously hybridity had offered through its cultivation and condition of

otherness.

The novel does not shrink from the more sinister side of love, however; Moor's lover Uma tells him: '"Call me mad for love."' (279) Such madness leads her to attempt to murder Moor within the guise of a mutual suicide pact. Moor's meditation on the importance of love is powerfully reminiscent of the role hitherto assigned to hybridity and migrancy in Rushdie's work:

> love as the blending of spirits, as mélange, as the triumph of the impure, mongrel, conjoining the best of us over what there is in us of the solitary [...] the pure; of love as democracy, as the victory of the [...] Many over the clean, mean, apartheiding Ones [...] To love is to lose omnipotence and omniscience [...] It is a kind of fall [...] without that leap nobody comes to life. (289)

It is no coincidence Rushdie chooses to identify love with a fall which refers not only to falling in love, but to the Fall, that defining characteristic of the Romantic paradigm. For Rushdie, love has a significance beyond the merely romantic; it gains a political dimension via its 'mongrel' blending of spirits, its multiplicity, which is seen in opposition to the 'apartheiding Ones'. This hope is set against a background of appalling pessimism; Zeenat Vakil reappears in this novel only to be killed, Saleem Sinai's son Adam becomes a corrupt minion of Abraham Zogoiby, and Aurora's paintings are all destroyed.

In the context of this destruction, we might speculate that the romance genre (and the dynamic of the Romantic sublime that arises from romance's characteristic longing for unity), is particularly suited to conveying both the desire for, and the impossibility of, political unification. As Kane notes so aptly, in tracing *MC*'s 'genealogical affiliations' (Kane, 1996: 110) with romance, 'the workings of textual romance plots lead back to fragmentation. Each generation yields a pairing based on the fantasy of wholeness [...] The beloved inevitably fails to fulfill the lover's desire for an unattainable cohesive identity, which is analogous to the subaltern's desire

for a unified, utopian nation' (Kane, 1996: 109). Thus the failure of love in *TMLS* exceeds its literal failure, and may be seen on an allegorical level to have political ramifications for the post-colonial deconstruction of the concept of nationhood.

Rushdie's aesthetic embroilment in the romantic is perhaps the reason why the quest to restore the lost painting of the mother will, from the beginning, have been a futile one.[74] The lost painting of Aurora is restored by the woman artist whom Vasco Miranda, Aurora's former lover and now a deranged hermit, has imprisoned in his mansion, and whom Moor meets towards the end of the novel. Her name is Aoi Uë, and as Moor notes, 'the five enabling sounds of language [...] constructed her.' (423). It is significant that her name consists of all the key vowels of the language; within the Romantic paradigm, her name signifies both the means by which the representation of the mother is restored, and also represents why the mother is ultimately unattainable. By this, I mean that it is through language that the Romantic artist attempts to represent his separation from (M)other Nature, and thus recapture what he has lost; however, it is precisely that language which signifies his separation from the (M)other. In creating a female character who possesses the 'enabling sounds of language', and in assigning her an 'heroic rôle' (419), Rushdie succeeds in complicating the relationship between the artist and nature (represented by Aurora's painting), but like Aurora, Aoi Uë also dies, murdered by Vasco Miranda just as she finishes restoring the painting of the lost mother.

Significantly, the main inspiration Moor takes from his association with Aoi Uë is her faith in love; she tells him of her love for her husband: "'our love is still the most important event in my life. Defeated love is still a treasure,"' and Rushdie ends the novel with Moor's meditation and dedication

> to lost but sweetest love, to the love that endures beyond defeat, beyond annihilation, beyond despair; to the defeated love that is greater than what defeats it, to that most profound of our needs, to our need for flowing together, for putting an end to frontiers, for the dropping of the boundaries of the self. (433)

At the novel's close, then, love is posited as the only true means of hybridity, and though ironically it may be defeated love, for Rushdie, that love still retains its redemptive powers. One might speculate about where Rushdie, having seemingly abandoned hope in hybridity and placed it even more strongly in love, will venture in terms of fictional ground, considering that his next novel will utilise the Orpheus myth as its main framework.[75] Perhaps, if Rushdie manages to resolve the 'gender-troubles' of the Romantic paradigm, Euridyce will rescue Orpheus.

1. The lines which express Milton's desire to replace physical heroism with spiritual heroism expressed through an imaginative effort can be found in books IX and XI, ed. Christopher Ricks, *John Milton: Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained* (New York: Signet Classic, 1982). Michael foretells the first kind of heroism after the Fall:

> Such were these Giants, men of high renown;
> For in those days might only shall be admir'd,
> And Valor and Heroic Virtue call'd;
> To overcome in Battle, and subdue
> Nations, and bring home spoils with infinite
> Man-slaughter, shall be held the highest pitch
> Of human Glory, and for Glory done
> Of triumph, to be styl'd great Conquerors,
> Patrons of Mankind, Gods, and Sons of Gods,
> Destroyers rightlier call'd and Plagues of men.
> Thus Fame shall be achiev'd, renown on Earth,
> And what most merits fame in silence hid.
> (*Paradise Lost*, XI. 688-699)

And in Book IX, Milton identifies the previous function of 'Heroic arguments' in narratives about heroes as being:

> [...] to dissect
> With long and tedious havoc fabl'd Knights
> In battles feign'd; the better fortitude
> Of Patience and Heroic Martyrdom
> Unsung; or to describe Races and Games,
> Or tilting Furniture, emblazon'd Shields,
> Impreses quaint, Caparisons and Steeds;
> Base and tinsel Trappings, gorgeous Knights
> At Joust and Tournament; then marshall'd Feast
> Serv'd up in Hall with Sewers, and Seneschals;
> The skill of Artifice or Office mean.
> (*Paradise Lost*, IX.27-37)

2. For example, *In Milton's Poetry of Choice and Its Romantic Heirs*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1973) Leslie Brisman asserts, 'In Blake's *Milton*, the recognition of Satan or Selfhood supplies the new apocalyptic energy [...] The savior-poet (substitute Blake's Milton for

Milton's Jesus) [...] goes forth to redeem the world' (Brisman, 1973: 197). He writes additionally that, '*Milton* seeks not a reconciliation with history but a revision of it. Blake's epic presents a rewriting of literary history--and a model for the prophetic rewriting of psychic history' (Brisman, 1973: 198).

3. M. Keith Booker, '*Finnegans Wake* and *The Satanic Verses*: Two Modern Myths of the Fall', *Critique*, v32(3), (Spring 1991), 190-207.

4. Anthony Close, 'The Empirical Author', *Philosophy and Literature*, v14, (1990), 248-67.

5. Salman Rushdie, 'In Good Faith', in *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* (London: Granta, 1992), pp. 393-414, (p. 403). All subsequent references to Rushdie's individual essays will refer to them as they are collected in this edition.

6. Molly A. Daniels, *The Prophetic Novel* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991).

7. John Drew, *India and the Romantic Imagination* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987).

8. Rosemary George, *The Politics of Home* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 138-157.

9. *IH*, pp. 222-25.

10. James Harrison, *Salman Rushdie* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992), p. 10.

11. Aron R. Ali, 'All Names Mean Something': Salman Rushdie's *Haroun* and the Legacy of Islam', *Contemporary Literature*, 36(1), (Spring 1995), 103-29, (pp. 103-104).

12. Jean-Pierre Durix, '"The Gardener of Stories": Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, v29(1), (1993), 114-22, (p. 116).

13. Walter J. Reed, *Meditations on the Hero: A Study of the Romantic Hero in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974).

14. Northrop Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (London: Penguin, 1990).

15. Jean M. Kane, 'The Migrant Intellectual and the Body of History in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*', *Contemporary Literature*, v37(1), (Spring 1996), 168-80.

16. For a detailed description of the convoluted genealogy of the babies due to various switches and deceptions, and a discussion of their possible mother-figures and father-figures, see M.K. Naik, 'A Life of Fragments: The Fate of Identity in *Midnight's Children*', *The Indian Literary Review*, v3(3), (October 1985), 63-68.

17. Kane, p. 95.

18. Kane sees the plot of *MC* as apocalyptic, and in 'Worlds Apart: Salman Rushdie's "Privileged Arenas"', in *Shades of Empire in Colonial and Post-Colonial Literatures*, ed. by C.C. Barfoot and Theo D'Haen (Amsterdam and Atlanta, Georgia: Rodopi, 1993), pp. 65-82, Richard Todd sees Shame's conclusion as an 'adumbrated apocalypse' (Todd, 1993: 76).

19. Rushdie has admitted that, while *TMLS* has its comic moments, this is because he did not want 'to make it just straightforwardly apocalyptic' (McCabe, 1997: 67-68). Colin McCabe, 'Salman Rushdie Talks to the London Consortium About *The Satanic Verses*', *Critical Quarterly*, v38(2), (Summer 1996), 51-70.

20. William Empson notes Blake's famous remark in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, 'that Milton like all true poets was of the Devil's party without knowing it' (Empson, 1965: 17). He also mentions the 'appreciative attitude of Blake and Shelley, who said that the reason why the poem [Paradise Lost] is so good is that it makes God so bad.' (Empson, 1965: 13) In William Empson, *Milton's God* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965).

21. Aleid Fokkema, 'Post-Modern Fragmentation or Authentic Essence?: Character in *The Satanic Verses*', in *Shades of Empire in Colonial and Post-Colonial Literatures*, ed. by C.C. Barfoot and Theo D'haen (Rodopi, Amsterdam and Atlanta, Georgia: 1993), pp. 51-63.

22. Ameena Meer, 'Salman Rushdie', in *Bomb: Interviews,* ed. by Betsy Sussler (San Francisco: City Lights, 1992), pp. 61-74.

23. Ishrat Lindblad, 'Salman Rushdie's The Satanic Verses: Monoism contra Pluralism', in *From Commonwealth to Post-Colonial,* ed. by Anna Rutherford (Sydney: Dangaroo Press, 1992), pp. 83-90.

24. For a discussion of satanic narration and its relation to ideas about Islam, see Marlena G. Corcoran, 'Salman Rushdie's Satanic Narration', *The Iowa Review*, v20(1), (Winter 1990), 155-67.

25. Mann, '"Being Borne Across": Translation and Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses'*, p. 300.

26. Spivak, 'Reading *The Satanic Verses'*, p. 112.

27. Mann, p. 282. Dingwaney calls Shame's narrator, 'a barely disguised stand-in for Rushdie' (Dingwaney, 1992: 161) See Anuradha Dingwaney, 'Author(iz)ing *Midnight's Children* and *Shame*: Salman Rushdie's Constructions of Authority', in *Reworlding the Literature of the Indian Diaspora,* ed. by Emmanuel S. Nelson (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1992), pp. 157-68.

28. Dingwaney, p. 159.

29. In 'The Empirical Author', Close discusses this matter thoroughly.

30. Corcoran, Salman Rushdie's Satanic Narration', p.159.

31. Booker, '*Finnegans Wake* and *The Satanic Verses*: Two Modern Myths of the Fall'.

32. 'Is Nothing Sacred?', *IH*, pp. 415-29.

33. Close, 'The Empirical Author', p. 261.

34. 'Imaginary Homelands', in *IH*, pp. 9-21.

35. Gary J. Handwerk, *Irony and Ethics in Narrative from Schlegel to Lacan* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985).

36. 'Julian Barnes', in *IH*, pp. 241-243.

37. For a further discussion of the Sea of Stories in the context of how it relates to the Indian tradition of story-telling, see Vidyut Aklujkar, '*Haroun and the Sea of Stories*: Metamorphosis of an old Metaphor', *Commonwealth Novel in English*, v6(1-2), (Spring and Fall 1993), 1-12.

38. Sushila Singh, '*Haroun and the Sea of Stories*: Rushdie's Flight to Freedom', in *The Novels of Salman Rushdie*, ed. Bby R.K. Dhawan and G.R. Taneja (New Delhi: Indian Society For Commonwealth Studies, 1992), pp. 209-16.

39. Cundy also notes this use by Rushdie of characters from the *Conference of the Birds.* See Catherine Cundy, '"Rehearsing Voices": Salman Rushdie's *Grimus*', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, v27(1), (1992), 128-38.

40. Kane, p. 104.

41. See Durix, '"The Gardener of Stories": Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*', p. 117.

42. Kane, pp. 109-10.

43. 'Censorship', in *IH*, pp. 37-40.

44. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed. by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 24-28.

45. 'One Thousand Days in a Balloon', in *IH*, pp. 430-439.

46. Todd sees Raza Hyder and Iskander Harappa as 'two conflicting types of epic hero' (Todd, 1993: 74).

47. Close notes the particular marginality of Rushdie's heroes, in 'The Empirical Author', p. 261.

48. Barbara Johnson, 'My Monster, My Self', *Diacritics*, v12(2), (Summer 1982), 2-10.

49. Anuradha Dingwaney Needham, 'The Politics of Post-Colonial Identity in Salman Rushdie', *The Massachusetts Review*, v29(4), (Winter 1988-89), 609-24, (pp. 622-23).

50. Elya Adamowicz, 'Monsters in Surrealism: Hunting the Human-Headed Bombyx', in *Modernism and the European Unconscious* ed. by Peter Collier and Judy Davies (Oxford: Polity Press, 1990), pp. 283-302.

51. Kate Teltscher, *India Inscribed: European and British Writing on India 1600-1800* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995).

52. For example, Harrison accuses Rushdie of constructing Shame's women characters as victims, as well as of a 'sweeping sexist stereotyping' (Harrison, 1992: 86) of women. Spivak in 'Reading *The Satanic Verses*' levels the same criticism, claiming *Shame* portrays the powerful woman as a monster, and complains that *The Satanic Verses* ends with Saladin Chamcha's 'reconciliation with *father* and nationality' (Spivak, 1993: 111). Mann points to Rushdie's failure to champion the cause of women in the death or subsumation of his strong female characters, claiming they represent rather than address male fears about female sexuality; see '"Being Borne Across": Translation and Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*', pp. 294-97.

53. Aijaz Ahmad, 'The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality' in *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. by Padmini Mongia (London and New York: Arnold, 1996), pp. 276-93.

54. George, *The Politics of Home*, pp. 199-201.

55. Ella Shohat, 'Notes on the Post-Colonial', in *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. by Padmini Mongia, pp. 321-34.

56. Arif Dirlik, 'The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism', in *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. by Padmini Mongia, pp. 294-320, (in particular, pp. 304-305).

57. Annie E. Coombes, 'The Recalcitrant Object: Culture Contact and the Question of Hybridity', in *Colonial Discourse/Postcolonial Theory*, ed. by Francis Barker, Peter Hulme and Margaret Iversen (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 89-114.

58. Robert J.C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

59. Close, 'The Empirical Author', p. 249.

60. 'Günter Grass', in *IH*, pp. 273-81.

61. Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, trans. by Robert Czerny with John Costello and Kathleen McLaughlin (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986).

62. '"Commonwealth Literature" Does Not Exist', in *IH*, pp. 61-70.

63. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993), see in particular pp. 377-95 and 401-8.

64. 'The Location of Brazil', in *IH*, pp. 118-25.

65. *Culture and Imperialism*, pp. 405-6.

66. 'On Palestinian Identity: A Conversation With Edward Said', in *IH*, pp. 166-184.

67. Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, p. 108.

68. In 'Post-Modern Fragmentation or Authentic Essence: Character in *The Satanic Verses*', Fokkema also notes how necessary Chamcha's ability to love is to his subjectivity.

69. Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

70. Kerr notes the recurring loss of the mother-figure in *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses* as 'tragic liberation' in the former, and 'bathos' in the latter. See David Kerr, 'Migration and the Human Spirit in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*', *Commonwealth Review*, v2(1-2), 1990-1991, pp.168-80, (p. 170).

71. Booker, '*Finnegans Wake* and *The Satanic Verses*: Two Modern Myths of the Fall', pp. 193-4.

72. Kane suggests that romantic love and the desire for national unification are metonymical contructs, in which the fragment inspires the desire for a seemingly lost wholeness. See 'The Migrant Intellectual and the Body of History: Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*', p. 108.

73. Jean-Pierre Durix, 'The Artistic Journey in Salman Rushdie's *Shame*', *World Literature Written in English*, v23(2), (Spring 1984), 451-63.

74. In 'The Migrant Intellectual and the Body of History: Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*', Kane implicitly suggests that with regard to *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie's political and aesthetic interests are irreconcilable, i.e. that a Romantic aesthetic cannot yield a desirable political outcome. See in particular pp. 109-10 for this.

75. See Eric Griffiths, 'The Mythic Moment', *The Guardian*, 2 August 1996, p. 15, for a brief description of Rushdie's next novel.

Chapter Four: Ben Okri - Romantic Ironist and/or African Mystic?

The title of this chapter seems to pose a question about whether to read Ben Okri's work in the context of a contemporary Romantic Irony, or rather, to read his work as more mystical, and centred upon the attainment of what we might term, for the moment, an African spiritual consciousness. But the 'and' in the title is significant; I do not propose that the two alternatives mentioned above are necessarily incompatible. Indeed, the principles of what I have defined in the introduction as Romantic Irony may at times be integral to Okri's conception of an African spiritual consciousness. In this chapter, we will explore how the themes of imaginative transcendence, romantic love, and the artist-as-hero are expressed in Okri's work. I will also argue that in particular, in his last novel, *Dangerous Love* (1996) (hereafter referred to as *DL*), Okri stages a conflict between the transcendent powers of creativity often associated in his work with a notion of 'Africa', and the oppressive and restricting power of the Nigerian political state. The representation of this conflict between the transcendence associated with art and the corruption attached to material politics is crucial to Okri's notion of an African spiritual consciousness; later in this chapter we will discuss how this opposition may represent the tension between an idealised, spiritualised Panafrican unity, and the often unpleasant material reality of the nation-state, which maintains its unity through corrupt and oppressive acts. With regard to those occasions when Okri fails to connect his Romantic celebration of imaginative transcendence with an ironic counterpoint in the form of specific cultural situations, I will question whether or not his writing descends into hollow rhetoric. In connection with this last point, I will discuss the problematics of using the term Romantic Irony within this context, because of the difficulty in differentiating between modes of realism and modes of the fantastical in 'non-

Western' literature. However, Okri's work is often placed by critics within, as well as against, a Western literary tradition; what follows is a brief summary of various critics' positions on how Okri's work might be viewed within these traditions.

Reading Okri Within and Against a Western Literary and Critical Tradition:

1) Okri as a Modernist Writer

Most critics who write about Okri's work agree that he draws from both European and African literary and cultural sources, although they do not always agree as to why or how Okri combines these sources within his work. T.J. Cribb, for example, sees Okri's work as first a continuation, and later a transformation of European Modernism, which becomes a kind of hyper-Modernism when the 'overlap' of Western and non-Western cultures becomes pervasive, and the vicissitudes of daily life become even more disorientating.[1] For him, Okri's *The Landscapes Within*, building from Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, is 'a novel intimately imagined within the Western tradition' (Cribb, 1992: 146). Charles E. Nnolim, however, sees Okri's modernist aesthetic as drawing from and rewriting an earlier, specifically African modernist tradition,[2] and Alistair Niven speculates that Okri's aesthetic may indicate that a new era of African Modernism has begun.[3]

2) Okri as a Postmodernist Writer

While there are those who would call Okri a Modernist, there are still others, such as Olatubosun Ogunsanwo, who would associate Okri with postmodernism; Ogunsanwo suggests that because Okri not only decolonises Western literary realism with the use of African myth, but also decolonises African uses of Western realism with his parody of the abiku myth as it is used by Wole

Soyinka and John Pepper Clark, his strategies parallel those of postmodernism.[4] Likewise, Quayson feels that Okri gradually breaks from a restrictive 'Western paradigm of realism' (Quayson, 1997: 102), but does not use the word 'postmodern' to describe Okri's work.[5] John C. Hawley feels that Okri's abiku narrative illustrates a post-colonial postmodernism, because it focuses on the paradox and liminality associated with belonging to more than one cultural system, and challenges Western narratives that depend upon closure for meaning.[6]

3) Okri as a Romantic Writer, and a Romantic Ironist

Instead of seeing Okri's use of the abiku as specifically postmodernist, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. feels that Okri's use of the abiku figure further develops the genre of the fantastic, which we have previously associated in Chapter One with the romantic, and intimates that Okri uses this mode to write himself as a subject rather than an object, a strategy we have likewise previously identified with a contemporary use of Romantic Irony.[7] Okri also often focuses, as we shall discuss at great length later in this chapter, upon the subjectivity of the artist; Nnolim notes Okri's penchant for exploring the consciousness of artists and the potential for such visionary, aestheticised characters to express alienation and rebelliousness.[8] Ayo Mamudu also notes this fascination with the figure of the artist, and feels that in *The Landscapes Within*, Okri suggests that the artist is, essentially, a Romantic figure who can prophesy the future.[9] As Boehmer notes, Okri 'take[s] the supernatural more seriously, less as device than as actual mystery, a distortion of the real which is a part of lived experience' (Boehmer, 1995: 235-236). However, as with Rushdie's visionary yet ironically handicapped heroes, Quayson stresses that there is a diminution in the stature of Azaro, the visionary hero-figure in *The Famished Road* (1991) (hereafter referred to as *FR*); Azaro 'partially subsists within the mythopoeic framework by having access to the spirit-world but no longer is this access volitional and part of an

epic quest' (Quayson, 1997: 139). Though *FR* represents, as we shall discuss later in this chapter, the epic search for African unity, the diminished stature of its hero plays a part in desconstructing the grand-narrative of the epic quest that lies at the heart of the nationalist romance.

Having identified how various critics touch, for the most part indirectly, upon the Romantic quality of Okri's work, it is perhaps useful now to turn to Okri's work itself, in order to understand how and where his rhetorical and thematic concerns intersect with the romantic. In his pamphlet *Birds of Heaven* (1996),[10] Okri's two essays express a personal philosophy which is highly Romantic in nature, and I dwell on this short document because a close reading of its passages provide us with many distinct Romantic parallels. The first section, 'Beyond Words', is subtitled 'A Secular Sermon', immediately evoking the sense of the artist-speaker (Okri) as some kind of priest or prophet-figure. The title itself, 'Beyond Words', seems to allude to the imminence of transcendence, the achievement of a spiritual plane beyond language. For Okri, 'the highest things are beyond words [...]Literature too wants to transcend its primary condition and become something higher' (5). He speaks of 'the power of human transcendence' (9) to reach 'that beautiful greatness brooding in the mystery of our blood' (11). The rhetoric is Romantic and mystical, and for Okri, transcendence seems to be that force which enables people to realise their creative potential. The main difference between Romantic rhetoric and Okri's 'sermon' is that here he is concerned with awakening the power of creativity in all people, as opposed to placing the onus of creativity purely upon the artist. Still, as the artist speaking, it becomes clear that part of his task is to act as a visionary beacon, to lead others to imaginative enlightenment.

'Beyond Words' also contains what we might regard as veiled references to the sublime; 'the ocean of words' (7) that overwhelms and transforms us (and which is reminiscent of Rushdie's 'Sea

of Stories'), the 'terrible silence' (6) that compels us to speak, or the woman flamenco dancer who becomes 'a wild unknown force', a 'dancer to God', who represents for Okri 'the courage to go beyond ourselves' (10,11). The last is particularly telling, as a female incarnation of a natural force, who acts as an intermediary to the divine; it must be stressed, however, that though Okri generalises from this example, he makes it a point previously in the essay to describe this woman in terms of her own artistic subjectivity (i.e. as a real dancer in the real world). In this manner, he avoids falling completely into the dynamic of the male artist speaking of a female Other/Nature.

For Okri, artistic expression is torn between the realm of the transcendent and the realm of the material, the noumenal and the phenomenal worlds. The familiar Neoplatonic tension between the real and the ideal, found in Romanticism's imaginative search for a more truthful world that lies beyond 'reality', can be found in Okri's claim that

> The greatest inspiration, the most sublime ideas of living that have come down to humanity come from a higher realm [...]Ideas and infinite possibilities dwell there in absolute tranquillity [...]But when they come to our earthly realm they acquire weight and words. They become less'. (12,13)

Okri's advice to the reader is to contemplate the absolute through the sublime, to seek what is beyond words, in order to create 'universal love and justice, love for one another, or intuitions of joyful creation' (13), or at least, the earthly, imperfect versions of these things. The act of imaginative contemplation is directed towards creating love and art, justice and universal harmony, and its purpose is to unite us, insofar as is possible, with the divine. The artistic individual is seen as an heroic visionary, and his or her quest is to reunite humanity with a higher, spiritual expression of reality.

Again reminiscent of Rushdie, the main method for Okri by which this quest can be achieved, is through telling stories. In the second section of the pamphlet, entitled 'Aphorisms and Fragments' from 'The Joys of Story-Telling', Okri ties the individual creative act to a larger, cultural and national consciousness. He writes,

> A people are as healthy and confident as the stories they tell themselves. Sick story-tellers can make their nations sick. And sick nations make for sick story-tellers. (18)

and

> Nations and peoples are largely the stories they feed themselves. If they tell themselves stories that are lies, they will suffer the future consequences of those lies. If they tell themselves stories that face their own truths, they will free their histories for future flowerings. (21)

Corrupt individuals can corrupt nations, and corrupt nations can corrupt individuals; the means by which this corruption is spread is through stories, whether they be a politician's promises and lies, or an individual's failure to recognize these lies and struggle against them. A parallel sentiment can be found in *HSS*, where the Sea of Stories has been polluted by evil tyrants who wish to enslave the people with silence and corrupted stories.

For Okri, corruption is signaled by chaos, creativity by order. This has interesting ramifications when viewed in relation to the formation of an African sense of spiritual identity, and how stories are responsible for that identity. In the following quotes, Okri comments upon Africa in relation to its stories, and an interesting division appears between Africa's abundance of stories, and an over-abundance or chaos of stories in Africa, caused by suffering and a lack of direction and identity. We may compare the following two fragments:

> In Africa everything is a story, everything is a repository of stories. Spiders, the wind,

> a leaf, a tree, the moon, silence, a glance, a mysterious old man, an owl at midnight [...]are all impregnated with stories. In Africa things are stories, they store stories, and they yield stories at the right moment of dreaming, when we are open to the secret side of objects and moods. (26)
>
> Africa is a land bristling with too many stories and moods. This over-abundance of stories, this pollulation, is a sort of chaos. A land of too many stories is a land that doesn't necessarily learn from its stories. It should trade some of its stories for clarity [...]Dying lands breed stories [...]like corpses breed worms. A land beginning to define itself, to create beauty and order from its own chaos, moves from having too many moods and stories [...]to having clear structures, silences, clear music [...]If suffering breeds stories, then the transformation of suffering into a higher order and beauty and functionality breathes tranquillity. (27)

For Okri, the purity of stories which is Africa itself becomes clouded by a lack of African identity and destiny. Too much suffering and confusion results in a 'pollulation', the word itself evoking a dual sense of pollution and pullulation, or wild growth. Okri's solution to the problem seems to be a call for more artistic coherence, the transformation of chaotic, everyday stories of suffering into stories about peace and order, beauty and tranquillity. Though this solution may seem somewhat abstract and naively Romantic, we will see later how the novels anchor these ideas to the political situation in Nigeria, and to the chaos that governments create in order to more easily control their people. With respect to this political correlative, Okri's suggestions for the transformation of chaos into order signify a move towards self-determination and agency for the disenfranchised characters in his novels.

But we are still faced with determining what kind of person is capable of enacting such a transformation, and the answer to this leads us back to the Romantic idea of the artist as a variety of the messianic hero. Okri tells us that the true story-teller is that person who 'suffers the chaos and the madness, the nightmare -resolves it all, sees clearly, and guides you surely through the fragmentation and the shifting world' (38). Elsewhere in this essay, Okri invokes Jesus as a master story-teller, and his 'true story-teller' would seem to share some of the characteristics of that Christian

messiah. The true story-teller suffers so that others might find redemption, and he serves as a guide through the fragmented, chaotically shifting world; this type of story-teller has traditionally been embodied in literature by the artist-hero who acts as saviour to a culture, attempting to restore its presumably lost unity. Lest the Romantic crisis of fragmentation and the search for lost unity not be obvious enough in this fragment, we see their presence when Okri further declares that 'It is precisely in a broken age that we need mystery and a re-awakened sense of wonder: need them in order to be *whole* again' (40, my italics). Within these fragments, Okri casts the story-teller, who bears an uncanny resemblance to the Romantic artist, in the role of African messiah.

For all intents and purposes, declarations of his personal artistic philosophy such as, 'Creativity is a secular infinity' (41), might well serve to cast Okri himself in the role of messiah. This view is reinforced by his statements that, 'Love is the greatest creativity of them all, and the most blessed' (41), and that 'Creativity is love, a very high kind of love' (42). The parallel here to Christ is unmistakable: Okri's artist is also someone able to access god-like powers of creation, and in each case, creativity is also an act of love. Okri's identification of creativity with love, particularly love which is by implication infinite, allows Okri, the creative individual behind these statements, to assume the role of the artist-messiah. Later in this chapter we will examine more specifically how the artist-hero functions in his work with regard to creating an African identity, and whether or not this function takes on an ironic cast.

Thus far we have discussed Okri's preoccupation with imaginative transcendence, love, the sublime, and the artist as hero. Distilled as they are from a small pamphlet, these themes seem abstractly and purely Romantic, but I hope to show that their application in fiction often assumes a more ironic aspect. Part of this irony, I will argue, stems from a change of emphasis; within *FR*, for

example, we will discuss how Western ideas of transcendence are critiqued, and how transcendence is reconceptualised as transformation, both spiritual and material. Additionally, the narrative of religious transcendence is secularised, treated as story or fiction. We will discuss how Romantic ideals are adapted to establish the theory of a viable Panafricanism, in particular how imaginative transcendence acts as the basis for this Panafricanism. In *DL*, we will examine the ironic cycle of creation and destruction, artistic epiphany and spiritual debasement, and how this cycle is necessary within the novel for the formation of its main character's creative identity. Where relevant, we will point out similarities--on the subjects of hybridity, migration and story-telling--between Okri's work and that of Salman Rushdie.

We will also question whether Okri, if we are indeed to cast him in the role of the contemporary Romantic Ironist, fails to overcome certain shortcomings of the Romantic paradigm when dealing with aspects of gender. In both these novels, we will see how the figure of Madame Koto is portrayed as the potential spiritual mother of Africa. This portrayal requires some critique, not only because it represents a feminisation of colonised territory, i.e. of Mother Africa, but also because in this subsumption of 'woman' into a maternal goddess figure, her main function within a patriarchal system is, problematically, to give birth to a new political state or continent. In the following sections, we will explore the ideas mentioned above, as well as their interrelatedness to each other.

Transcendence

In his critique of Western ideas of transcendence, Okri again evokes Christian imagery and mythology. However, references to this mythology are subsumed within questions of African

spirituality. The main protagonist of *FR* is a spirit-child who tells us:

> They named me Lazaro. But as I became the subject of much jest, and as many were uneasy with the connection between Lazaro and Lazarus, Mum shortened my name to Azaro. (8)

As Lazarus wavers between life, death and resurrection, so too does Azaro. (This reference to Christian resurrection continues in *Songs of Enchantment* (1993) (hereafter referred to as *SE*), where we see that Ade the spirit-child is the son of a carpenter.) The shortening of names is significant; Azaro is not just a Lazarus stand-in, but a potential 'saviour hero' of the African people,[11] due specifically to his (African) spirit-child nature; like Azaro, Africa might also rise again. Perhaps the text's uneasiness at the connection between 'Lazaro' and 'Lazarus' reflects the uneasy resemblance between Western ideas of transcendence and African spirituality. Certainly, the shortening of the name expresses a conscious differentiation between the two.

As a Lazarus-figure, Azaro might reach the spirit world after death; as an African spirit-child, Azaro experiences a tension within his lifetime, between the imaginative world of spirits and 'the world of the Living'. He reports:

> We are the strange ones, with half of our beings always in the spirit world [...]Disliked in the spirit world and branded amongst the Living, our unwillingness to stay affected all kinds of balances [...]To be born is to come into the world weighed down with strange gifts of the soul, with enigmas and an inextinguishable sense of exile [...]somewhere in the interspace between the spirit world and the Living, I chose to stay [...]I often found myself oscillating between both worlds. (4,5, 8)

Azaro chooses to stay in the world of the Living out of love for his mother, but in fact Azaro belongs wholly to no world. He is a kind of spiritual migrant, whose alienated 'double-vision' of this world and beyond can be regarded in the same spirit (so to speak) as the Romantic artist-hero's. In both

instances, connection with a higher, spiritual world is necessary for the creation of transformative visions.

In the case of the spirit-child, the abject quality of the migrant is his strength; the strength of perpetual movement, perpetual transformation. Within Okri's narrative, the inspiration for this transformation comes from the world beyond the Living. Azaro relates that the king of the spirit-world

> was a wonderful personage who sometimes appeared in the form of a great cat. He had a red beard and eyes of greenish sapphire [...]If there is anything common to all of his lives, the essence of his genius, it might well be the love of transformation, and the transformation of love into higher realities. (3-4)

Though this passage also touches on the notion of love as a means of transcendence, we will discuss the relationship in Okri's fiction between love and transcendence more fully later in this chapter. What I wish to focus on here is the idea of transformation as a mode of transcendence. According to our narrator Azaro, the process by which 'higher realities' are achieved involves 'transformation'. We may take 'higher realities' to indicate transcendence, but these higher realities remain undefined, so it is difficult to tell if transcendence is the ultimate goal, or if these higher realities simply facilitate further transformation, or how specifically this kind of transcendence might compare to Romantic transcendence. Cribb highlights one possible difference between Western and West African reactions to being 'integrated into some higher metaphysical whole, whether in mysticism or Romanticism' (Cribb, 1992: 147-148). He maintains that the Western reaction is anxiety, while the West African reaction is serenity, although instead of this dichotomy of reaction, I would suggest that in the case of Okri's fiction, the 'West African' response would involve a transition from transcendence to 'transformation', and that this transformation is in part a reaction against Western modes of

transcendence.

We see that Azaro refutes the totalizing, corrupted form of transcendence he sees as characteristic of Western theology when he encounters representatives of the church, and remarks,

> They were the worshippers at the shrine of suffering and we listened to their cries for the secrets of transforming anguish into power. We could hear the incantations, the money-creating howls, the invoked names of destiny-altering deities, gods of vengeance, gods of wealth. (282)

and one woman among the devout shouts in typical evangelist rhetoric, 'The world is full of evil. Repent! Or in your darkness you will be driven out [...]Repent! Ask for light and your sleep will be transformed!' (283) Instead of transforming love into higher realities, the Western version of spirituality transforms 'anguish into power'. The deities invoked cannot transcend the material world, corrupted as they have been by power, money, vengeance and wealth. Instead of love, they seek penitent spirits, coerced converts to light, whose sleep will be transformed, but perhaps not for the better. This call for transformation in the name of transcendence remains empty of spirituality because it is ultimately concerned with power. Okri's evocation of religious rhetoric in this instance is more a criticism of Western theological transcendence.

In contrast, Azaro's 'migrant spirituality' exists to transform the anguish of everyday life not into corrupted power, but into love. This transformation is arrived at through a mixture of spiritual vision and material action; the spirit-child has a choice whether or not to maintain his precarious position between the noumenal and phenomenal worlds. Just as he does, the spirit-child tells us, other things must struggle and be struggled for if they are to be born and transform the world:

> Things that are not ready, not willing to be born or to become, things for which adequate preparations have not been made to sustain their momentous births, things

> that are not resolved, things bound up with failure and with fear of being [...] There are many who are of this condition and do not know it. There are many nations, civilisations, ideas, half-discoveries, revolutions, loves, art forms, experiments, and historical events [...]They all yearn to make of themselves a beautiful sacrifice, a difficult sacrifice, to bring transformation, and to die shedding light within this life, setting the matter ready for their true beginnings to cry into being, scorched by the strange ecstasy of the will ascending to say yes to destiny and illumination. (487)

Like religious transcendence, here transformation involves sacrifice, but the transformations in question occur within this world, rather than the next. The trouble with this idea of transformation is that it never becomes specific, but remains caught up in abstract terms such as 'destiny' and 'illumination'. Although the mention of 'will' implies some sense of agency and self-determination, the fact of its ascendance removes it from an immediate material sphere. Despite the inference, as Quayson notes,[12] that the novel is set in Nigeria on the verge of independence, we are left with a hazy notion of spiritual destiny that rests on disturbingly empty quasi-religious rhetoric.

This vagueness in *FR* seems to foreshadow an even more worrying tendency in *AG*, to divorce spirituality from any sense of material culture. Billed as a 'fairytale', on the jacket-cover, the novel consists of various encounters with angelic, invisible beings who live in invisible cities only occasionally glimpsed by the narrator. The narrator is told by one of these beings not to try to understand what is happening to him, because understanding '"comes from beyond"' (15), and if he stops trying to understand things, he will find 'the truest grace' (39). The frequency with which words such as 'secret' and 'mysterious' occur is remarkable. This cross between a zen-like and a hermetic mysticism rings hollow by the end of the novel, and becomes fairly predictable as it tends to recycle the same abstract concepts, and use the same words to describe them.

The passage that contains the title reveals that this novel is little more than a repetition of

Okri's past and future textual commentaries about the relationship between creativity and spirituality: '"our highest creative acts [...]our purest art, our ascending songs, by some mysterious grace transcend so many boundaries [...]that we occasionally astonish even the gods"' (148). Here creativity is the means to a higher reality, and perhaps a kind of Godhead, which is worrying and somewhat outdated for its implications of potential omnipotence through creativity. In a sense, as I commented in *Cover Stories* (Radio Scotland, 1 May 1995),[13] the novel is a philosophy of the imagination, concerned with illuminating (another word popular with Okri) the potential of creative vision to recreate the universe and reach some higher plane of existence. This higher reality is benevolent in nature; its purpose, by means of '"CREATIVITY, AND GRACE"', is '"TO CREATE THE FIRST UNIVERSAL CIVILISATION OF JUSTICE AND LOVE"' (155). As a manifesto, the novel may have some value, but its constant harping (angelic or otherwise) about creativity and transcendent vision becomes tiresome and emptied of meaning. And what is perhaps more worrying is that this rhetoric, aside from the additional component of creativity, is not significantly different from absolutist Christian rhetoric concerning the attainment of grace. This is only partially countered by the parallel that can be drawn between the emphasis upon the 'invisible' narrator of *AG*, and what Okri writes in his essay 'Amongst the Silent Stones',[14] concerning the duty of such invisible, 'unheard' and 'silent' people to forge new realities in the face of debilitating political circumstances.

In contrast to this, there are interesting implications for a post-colonial sense of identity in how the idea of transformation in *FR* replaces and is differentiated from Western transcendence. There are two ways in which this occurs; transformation is contingent, rather than final, and Christian theology is transformed into fiction and relativised in relation to non-Western stories with the same theme. Both of these strategies can be illustrated in *FR* with the eponymous metaphor of the road,

which is bound up with a sense of cultural destiny, as Boehmer notes, citing the metaphor of the road or the journey as the 'symbolic framework' underlying many post-colonial texts, signifying 'the start of a different history [...]the road or path connecting disparate realities or contrasting states of being' (Boehmer, 1995: 190). When Azaro claims, 'I wanted [...] to have to find or create new roads from this one which is so hungry, this road of our refusal to be' (487), he is perhaps speaking of Africa's refusal to 'be', its failure to achieve its destiny. The famished road of *FR* might be read as a metaphor for an African destiny hungry to be born, and the desire 'to find or create new roads' would involve the conditions under which this might best be, if not attained, then at least sought after.

For Azaro, the quest to fulfill one's own destiny involves a knowledge of both eternity and contingency; he wonders if personal destiny might be fulfilled by

> the challenge of giving birth to one's true self, to one's new spirit, till the conditions are right for the new immutable star within one's universe to come into existence; the challenge to grow and learn and love, to master one's self; the possibilities of a new pact with one's spirit; the probability that no injustice lasts for ever, no love ever dies, that no light is ever really extinguished, that no true road is ever complete, that no way is ever definitive, no truth ever final, and that there are never really any beginnings or endings. (488)

Things that are eternal are also represented as being contingent. Even though 'no love ever dies' and 'no light is ever really extinguished', the statements, 'no true road is ever complete', 'no way is ever definitive, no truth ever final', etc. lead to the idea that the eternal consists of eternal redefinitions, infinite transformations. Likewise, the phrase 'new immutable star' may refer to that which is unchangeable, but it is a new immutability; the transcendent conditions under which one's new immutable star comes into the universe rest upon one's ability to 'grow and learn and love', i.e. to transform oneself.

Another differentiation from Western transcendence that can be seen with the metaphor of the road is how Christian theology is turned into 'just another story', another fiction about a people's destiny. Azaro's father, Black Tyger (perhaps a subtle reference to Blake's Tyger) tells the story of a two-thousand year old road being built to Heaven:

> the prophet's people are the dead. Heaven means different things to different people. They wanted to live, to be more alive. They wanted to know the essence of pain, they wanted to suffer, to feel, to love, to hate, to be greater than hate, and to be imperfect in order to always have something to strive towards, which is beauty [...]the moment [the road] is finished all of them will perish [...]they will have nothing to do, nothing to dream for, and no need for a future. They will perish of completeness, of boredom. The road is their soul, the soul of their history. (329)

The two thousand year old road to heaven is an obvious reference to Christianity, but here Christian transcendence is relegated to a dead-end story about other people. The road precedes Christian transcendence, rather than the reverse. In other words, Christian transcendence is only one imaginative narrative, one version of road-building and its transcendent objectives, and for Azaro and his people, its story is not the most important one. Okri's is a 'discourse that can challenge the dominant form of Christian religious expression while at the same time replicating the grand and generalizing tendencies of the world religion' (Quayson, 1997: 150). Significantly, the road acts as a metaphor for a collective soul, of a people and of their history, and of the direction they must take. We will talk further about this collectivity when we discuss two of Okri's metaphors for African/Panafrican identity, the figure of Madame Koto and the idea of 'The African Way'.

With the road as a metaphor for a journey that the collective soul of the people must make, it becomes easy to relativise the narrative; Africa and its people have their own road to salvation, and theirs is a different story that must be told, but there is a general blueprint to follow. The question

remains whether this narrative blueprint can have any practical significance, or whether it is too riddled with Romantic paradox to be of such use. With respect to the people who build any road, Black Tyger reports,

> each new generation begins with nothing and with everything. They know all the earlier mistakes. They may not know that they know, but they do. They know the early plans, the original intentions, the earliest dreams. Each generation has to reconnect the origins for themselves [...]Nothing can destroy them except themselves and they will never finish the road that is their soul and they do not know it. (330)

There are no beginnings and endings, so every generation can claim to have some kind of self-originality, yet the same generation knows 'the earliest dreams', and must 'reconnect the origins' to an earlier, more primal source. This tension between origin and originality is a crucial one within the Romantic paradigm, and within Okri's novel it remains unresolved and highly abstract. Furthermore, the fact that the road's builders do not know they know how to build the road, i.e. that the knowledge is unconscious and must be retrieved through dream or imagination, makes Okri's metaphor of the road a deeply Romantic one. A more positive aspect to this abstraction is that the agency of human imagination is acknowledged as the means by which the 'soul' or the road is created. In this sense, we might see African destiny linked to the ability of the imagination to create narratives, i.e. stories about how Africa might achieve this (thus far) nebulous destiny.

Although a relativisation of the journey narrative allows for the creation of a story about African destiny, on its own, the road remains an abstract commentary; it may correspond to the idea of African destiny, but how is this to be achieved in a 'material' cultural sense? It is only when this road, this destiny, encounters Western road-blocks that we begin to see further what an African sense of destiny entails, and this we will discuss later. However, the notion of African destiny is also very

much involved with the notion of Panafricanism, in that its road is a collectivity, the united will of the people.

Nationalism vs. The Ideal of Panafricanism: Madame Koto vs. The African Way, and Hybridity's Spiritual Politics

In this section, we will discuss Okri's metaphorical use of the figure of Madame Koto, in contrast to his metaphor of The African Way; we will examine how these two tropes are used to illustrate a conflict between two modes of Panafricanism: its concrete manifestation in the nationalist politics which result in an African nation-state such as Nigeria, and the idealised, spiritual unification of 'Africa' found in the original notion of Panafricanism, which we will discuss further in a moment. Okri's use of Madame Koto as a metaphor for Panafricanism is not unusual; as Boehmer points out, 'as a figure transcending national boundaries, the mother symbol has [...] provided a powerful talisman for pan-Africanism' (Boehmer, 1992: 242).[15] The adversarial positioning of Madame Koto against The African Way is further complicated by the history of gender-representation attached to the symbolic figure of the mother; the figure of Madame Koto may represent a certain political paradigm (i.e. nationalism), but she also highlights the problematical representation of women (particularly mothers) within the patriarchal narrative of nationalism. The mother is traditionally symbolic of the land and its origins, and she is often represented as a keeper of the land.[16] These representations, typical of West African writing,[17] may even continue to haunt post-colonial narratives which challenge nationalist narratives; Lyn Innes and Caroline Rooney comment that 'What happens in the post-Independence novel [...]is that the feminine principle embodied in the land, in Mother Earth, is replaced by female types-- whose symbolic function is to represent the people, the voters

who make up the nation' (Innes and Rooney, 1997: 198).[18] This is precisely the sort of role Madame Koto is assigned in the novel, as we shall discuss later in this section.

The idea of Panafricanism (often written as Pan-Africanism or pan-Africanism), 'involves, besides the specific relationship of Pan-Africanism to nationalist consciousness in Africa, the whole question of African aspirations in the modern world' (Irele, 1981: 118).[19] Although Panafricanism's agenda of fostering a unified Africa, with a common consciousness among its people of the history and condition of colonial oppression, has contributed to the formation of nationalist politics in Africa, it is also paradoxically one means of transcending specific national allegiances, and with this latter aspect, we begin to see its attraction for Okri. As Abiola Irele highlights, as soon as the struggle for independence became concrete and more territorial, Panafricanism became more concerned with the ideal of unity rather than the reality: 'The importance attached today to the idea of African unity among the younger generation of the African intelligentsia is a reflection of the disillusionment with the practical result of the nationalist movement in Africa' (Irele, 1981: 124). As we shall discuss, Okri's metaphor for Panafricanism, The African Way, may be viewed as an indication of this disillusionment, and hence as a more spiritually orientated challenge to the material reality of nationalism.

In its 'ideal' form, there is a decidedly mystical dimension to Panafricanism, which as we will see, becomes evident in Okri's work. In 'Un "neoprimitivisme africain"? L'exemple de Werewere Liking',[20] Liking is quoted as saying,

> 'On assume, on se réclame d'une Afrique panafricaine [...]J'ai l'habitude de dire que même si l'Afrique unie n'est pas pour 1993, elle vit déjà, elle existe [...]L'Afrique Panafricaine, cette aspiration profonde, cet élan naturel de la majorité des Africains, ce rêve des "pères des independances"'. (Hawkins, 1992: 240)

('One assumes, one asserts that there is a panafrican Africa [...]I am in the habit of saying that even if there is not a united Africa in 1993, it lives already, it exists [...] Panafrican Africa, this profound aspiration, this natural force of the majority of Africans, this dream of the "fathers of independence"'.) Though Liking refers to a tradition of francophone neoprimitivism, the general description of Panafricanism here would not necessarily be disputed outside that context. Panafricanism might, for instance, be regarded as a variety of Frantz Fanon's cultural nationalism, a 'cultural reaffirmation characterized by unbridled traditionalism and even ancestor-worship' (Amuta, 1995: 159).[21] Such a reaffirmation would certainly be one way for the culturally colonised African writer to shake off Western influences. However, according to Liking's view, the spirit of Panafricanism exists already, as a dream of unity in the unconscious of the people, an archetypal legacy of dreams handed down from generation to generation, and significantly, as we shall see, the dream of the '"fathers of independence."' In a more historical sense, Bruce King identifies what he calls 'the Pan-Africanism of the late 1970s' (King, 1980: 97),[22] and it is perhaps significant that Okri's first novel is written just after the period King identifies with the height of Pan-Africanism.

The notion of a collective is vital to Panafricanism; in *SE*, Okri uses the imagery of a collective dream, a collective unconscious held together by an imaginative connection, to express an African collectivity of identity. In *SE*, there is the suggestion that the people of Africa are

> all dreaming together, simultaneously; that a lesser god had scrambled up our minds; and that we were now floating in the dark sea of our collective confusion, our mingled consciousness, flowing into one another's fears. It became hard to tell if the world was real or if we had collectively invented it. (151)

The world is less a 'reality' than a collective invention, a kind of collective narrative, or a myth

dreamed by the collective. The mention of meddling by 'a lesser god' intimates the creative powers of a greater god at work, one who creates this collective myth. Such a collective myth, as King notes, is essential to any notion of Panafricanism that seeks to overcome the fragmentation of culture that occurs as a result of industrialisation, urbanisation, etc.,[23] but in Okri's work, there is an additonal battle being depicted, concerning who will determine and control the collective soul of the people.

This battle is played out partially over the body of Madame Koto, who seems to represent one figure of Panafricanism in *FR*. Madame Koto's role as a figure of Panafricanism is not surprising, since Panafricanism will ostensibly unite the community and help it to return to a mythic idea of the collective. The figure of Madame Koto resembles traditional representations of women in Africa, where 'women were the biological embodiment of the mythic cycle, by virtue of procreation and childbirth [...] They shared in the communal responsibility to maintain [the community's] continuity' (Barthold, 1980: 100).[24] Madame Koto's description allies her with the mother goddess (and hence with procreation and myth) seen by Azaro in the beginning of the novel. He relates,

> On my way back I came upon the goddess of the island. She was an image with a beautiful face and eyes of marble that glittered in the sun. All around her feet were metal gongs, kola nuts, kaoline, feathers of eagles and peacocks, bones of animals and bones too big to belong to animals. In a complete circle round her were white eggs on black saucers [...]Her magnificent pregnancy was so startling against the immense sea that she could have been giving birth to a god or to a new world. (13)

Compare this description to several of Madame Koto:

> Madame Koto came in carrying a fetish glistening with palm oil [...]She was often digging the earth, planting a secret, or taking one out [...]She had antimony on one side of her face, kaoline on the other, and her mouth was full of the juice of ground tobacco [...]Her stomach bloated with its abiku trinity. (85, 83, 85, 494)

Madame Koto is seen as being supernaturally strong, possessing magic and a knowledge of secrets,

complicit with spirits of the earth, especially the goddess of the island. Their parallel pregnancies, one to 'a god or to a new world', and the other with 'its abiku trinity', highlights their common function as mothers; their gestating children can be interpreted in *FR* as references to an African destiny, waiting to be born.

The fate of Madame Koto parallels the fate of a would-be Panafricanism, the powerful mythic images being gradually corrupted as Madame Koto 'sells out' to representatives of the West. One such representative declares, '"Madame, if you marry me you will sleep on a bed of money!" And as if to prove it he brought out a crisp packet of pound notes [...]his face glistening with the ecstasy of power' (223). Thus the road of Panafricanism and the African people becomes entangled in a whore-like marriage with Western money and power. It is no coincidence that Okri chooses the currency of pounds, evoking a sense of Britain's economic colonisation of Nigeria. The marriage with Western power is a marriage with materialism, and its effect on the spirit of Africa is devastating:

> Madame Koto grew distant. Her frame became bigger. Her voice became arrogant. She wore a lot of bangles and necklaces and seemed weighed down by the sheer quantity of decoration she carried on her body. She walked slowly, like one who has recently acquired power. (269)

Madame Koto has 'joined the party', accepted contracts for their meetings, 'is going to buy a car [...]and get electricity [...]paid cash for bales of lace [...]to sew dresses for party people' (281). She wears her hair differently, uses make-up and perfume, and can be seen, 'dancing with a fat man who seemed to have power' (273). The figure of Panafricanism has sold out to Western materialism and Western politics, and she no longer represents a true image of Africa.

In further support of this view of Madame Koto as a false image of Africa, we see that Madame Koto seems different even to her fellow Africans:

> People came to believe that Madame Koto had exceeded herself in witchcraft [...]They said she wore the hair of animals and human beings on her head [...]They said she had been drinking human blood to lengthen her life [...]that her foot was getting rotten because it belonged to someone who was trying to dance in their grave. She became, in the collective eyes of the people, a fabulous and monstrous creation. It did not matter that some people insisted that it was her political enemies who put out all these stories. The stories distorted our perception of her reality for ever. Slowly, they took her life over, made themselves real, and made her opaque in our eyes. (374)

Ironically, 'the collective eye' of the people comes to view Madame Koto with the same distortion by which the West created their own image of the 'primitive' African people: 'African cultures [...] Seemed so utterly alien [...]This challenge could only be absorbed into the European frame as [...]the negative of the positive concept of the civilized, the black Other to the white norm, the demonic opposition to the angels of reason and culture' (Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin, 1989: 159). The Africans accord to Madame Koto various cannibalistic tendencies, and as they listen to malicious stories about her, she seems to lose her reality, becoming opaque to them. The implication is that Western political narratives have helped to poison and obscure the image of a potent Panafricanism, blinding the people of Africa to their potential destiny. It must also be noted, however, that as people are still being murdered in many African cultures for their supposed practice of witchcraft, the above passage also contains a strong element of realism.

Madame Koto herself becomes a grotesque figure, as it becomes obvious she has indeed had intercourse with the West. Azaro observes:

> Her bad foot grew larger as if the road had impregnated it; her stomach bloated with its abiku trinity. She was initiated into another secret society that was famous for its manufacturing of reality. (494)

The road, or collective soul, is seeded with Western corruption, and Madame Koto herself is pregnant

with Western ideals, the ideals of a society whose fame lies in the 'manufacturing of reality'. She remains unable, however, to give birth to her abiku trinity, an image which contains significance for African identity; she cannot birth the spirit-child trinity, a strange hybrid of African mysticism and Western imperialism, but remains bloated with its incompatible bulk.

Madame Koto is an intriguing and powerful figure, but in terms of what she represents, there remains a problem with how gender is used in the portrayal of Panafricanism. Here we have woman subsumed into the identity of a mother goddess, who is also the embodiment of a continent struggling to become unified. Given that Okri, in the essay 'While the World Sleeps',[25] can assert without irony that 'The poet turns the earth into mother' (Okri, 1997: 2), Madame Koto appears to be just another version of Mother Nature, who embodies a Romantic dream of wholeness in her gestative state. It is no surprise to find that Rushdie evokes Mother India in *TMLS*, while here Okri evokes Mother Africa; the myth of the Mother-land may be utilised equally to frame issues of Indian nationalism or Panafrican alliance. Alhough Bardolph never uses the word Romantic, she identifies Azaro in particular with the young boy in Wordsworth's *The Prelude*, because like the boy, Azaro 'is in complete communion with nature' (Bardolph, 1992: 47). Comparing him to Saleem Sinai, she sees Azaro as an allegorical epic hero, a child who represents 'a nation or a people at a particular moment of their history' (Bardolph, 1992: 45).

The difference between the use of the Romantic mother-figure by these two different authors lies perhaps in the degree of irony with which they are incarnated; we discussed Rushdie's particular ironisation of this figure in Chapter Three. In *FR*, the only irony present seems to be that the mother goddess has been corrupted, and the idea of the mother as unifier destroyed. This might seem to be an effort to escape the Romantic paradigm, but if so, it only worsens the situation; the onus of blame

blame for the failure of Panafricanism is put upon the mother-figure, who becomes a whore to the West and thus corrupts the continent.

Even Madame Koto's connection to an indigenous tradition of witchcraft has been corrupted by the West; instead of acting as 'a "traditional" obstacle to change', her actions highlight 'convergences between discourses on the occult--with their emphasis on individual accumulation and debt--and a capitalist world-view' (Fisiy and Geschiere, 1996: 194).[26] Although Okri may in fact be placing the blame for a corrupted Africa on people and governments who collude with Western imperialism, the use of a whorish mother-figure to illustrate this borders, perhaps more implicitly rather than wholly explicitly, on misogyny. It is a misogyny typical of the '"fathers of independence,"' whose political success may depend on the subsumation of woman into her role as mother of the nation, and who may be threatened by any deviation from this role. It is interesting within this context to note that Madame Koto takes Azaro's mother prisoner, necessitating her rescue by Azaro and Black Tyger; here again, we have another version of the lost mother, with the onus of the quest for (national) reunification falling upon the male heroes of the novels, particularly the child-narrator, whose frequent presence in post-colonial literature signifies a pervasive concern with the issue of mother-lands and father-lands.[27]

To return to the figure of Madame Koto, she has not so much deviated from the role of national matriarch as compromised and warped it; in a vision, Black Tyger understands the implications of Madame Koto's betrayal, and bemoans the historical fate of his people. Azaro explains:

> He saw our people always preyed upon by other powers, manipulated by the Western world, our history and achievements rigged out of existence [...]He saw the divisions

> in our society, the lack of unity, he saw the widening pit between those who have and those who don't [...]he saw [...]the depleting of the people's will for transformation. (492)

Madame Koto's actions place Africa at the mercy of the Western world, and Black Tyger blames the Western world for the despoliation of the African people and their history. Western manipulation causes a rift in the collectivity of the people, a rift which divides those with material advantage from those without. The result is a loss of the people's will for transformation, the inability to move from image to image, a stagnation that will rob the people of their spiritual power and postpone the struggle for African destiny.

Here we see expressed more explicitly the connection between transformation and an African destiny fulfilled by Panafricanism, the dream of a united Africa; that dream, via the metaphor of the road discussed earlier in this chapter, is associated with ideas of salvation and transcendence, but secularised and refocused to reflect the idea of transformative images and fictions. Black Tyger's vision suggests that an African people able to transform themselves can create a united Africa in which there is no division of wealth, and where there exists a strong spirit of collectivity.

The price of this failed Panafricanism can be seen more directly in the reality of the riots that occur when the various political parties clash while campaigning for votes. After the Party of the Rich, supported by the West, distributes poison milk to the people, scenes of mayhem follow:

> Wild men were wreaking devastation [...]We rushed out [...] into the noises of corrupted ritual chants and caterwauling and machetes giving off electric sparks, crying for medicinal war. The voices howling for vengeance stampeded the street. The green bodies bristling with antimony sweated animal blood from their naked chests. They were a river of wild jaguars. Their deep earth songs overwhelmed the wind and came from everywhere, from the stars and the broken flowers [...]Their murderous utterances washed over our forgetfulness. It was impossible to tell who they were. (178)

Symbolically, the Western milk has been poisoned. Wild men shout corrupted ritual chants, and one political party cannot be told from another. The ritual power that might be used to unite Africa instead gives birth to violence. Once again, the portrayal of Africans is that of wild, primitives; 'howling' and sweating 'animal blood', their songs come from 'stars' and 'broken flowers'. Inevitably, we must ask whether such a portrayal of the African spirit as primitive and animalistic is any less stereotypical of the Other when it comes from the pen of a post-colonial writer. On the 'other' hand, these images of a powerful yet ruined African spirituality are placed within a fairly concrete context, the riot against the Western manipulation and corruption of local elections. The question remains, does the power of the imagery to inspire or threaten its audience outweigh or at least mitigate the stereotype? Unfortunately, that is something which cannot be decided here, where we can only pose the question and suggest the difficulty involved in answering such a question.

The text posits and searches for a spiritual unity that exists within Africa, a unity which has been lost because of imperialist intervention and the subsequent spawning of neocolonialism. This Romantic search for lost unity may gain a political dimension when transposed into post-colonial literature. And certainly, part of the failure of the Panafrican vision seems to be a failure of existing material politics, 'the manipulations of politicians and their interchangeable dreams [...] the insanity of thugs who don't even know for which parties they commit their atrocities' (180), with the result that Okri turns to a more spiritual alternative. One must ask: is this quasi-religious spirituality a consolatory fiction, and is material politics sacrificed to a virtually undefinable sense of African spirituality? Conversely, can Okri's Romantic vision, expressed in his '"literature of the newly ascendant spirit"' (Boehmer, 1995: 4) play a necessary and vital role in the artistic attempt to 're-dream' an entire continent?

In *FR*, we see a nation overrun by political strife, a strife based in division caused by material discrepancies introduced by the Western world. The material has subsumed the spiritual:

> The political parties waged their battles in the spirit spaces [...]The Party of the Rich drew support from the spirits of the Western world. At night, over our dreams, pacts were made, contracts drawn up in that realm of nightspace, and our futures were mortgaged, our destinies delayed. (495)

Okri presents the complexity and difficulty of an African nation seeking to fulfill its spiritual destiny. He places blame for this largely upon the Western world, though as the African people accept the narratives of the West in place of their own, they also become implicated in the process. The greatest difficulty seems to lie in creating a 'road' that will fuse together the material division of the people, while taking as its objective and ideal the spiritual concept of transformative being. In other words, there is a side to the text's spiritual vision which involves material politics; it calls for the redistribution of wealth.

Although Western imperialism is rejected, insofar as Western transcendence involves the concept of Romantic imagination, it might be adapted to the purpose of creating an African identity; in *FR*, transcendence is transformed, as it were, by an ethics of transformation. And tempting as it may be for Western critics to dismiss the last remnants of transcendence, in a post-colonial context, the issue of a transcendent and/or transformative 'indigenous' spirituality may remain crucial (especially for an artist who has visions of Panafricanism). This transformative spirituality, deeply committed to the idea of imagination, is exemplified in *SE* by 'The African Way'.

Although Madame Koto represents a failed Panafricanism, The African Way represents the hope of a successful and transformative Panafricanism. Azaro sees the ideal collectivity as embodied by his vision of The African Way. We receive a description of The African Way, which the spirits

and ancestors of Africa follow:

> The African Way [...]The Way of freedom and power and imaginative life; The Way that keeps the mind open to the existences beyond our earthly sphere, that keeps the spirit pure and primed to all the rich possibilities of living, that makes of their minds gateways through which all the thought-forms of primal creation can wander and take root and flower [...]The Way that develops and keeps its secrets of transformations--hate into love, beast into man, man into illustrious ancestor, ancestor into god; The Way whose centre grows from divine love [...] that believes in forgiveness and generosity of spirit [...] always kindling the understanding of signs. (159-160)

We might view The African Way as being concerned with freedom and power gleaned through imaginative life, whether it be open-mindedness or the fulfillment of artistic creation. Boehmer notes how the 'metanarrative of journeying and return [...]The start of a different history [...]The road or path connecting disparate realities or contrasting states of being' often serves as the 'symbolic framework' (Boehmer, 1995: 190) for a post-colonial text. The Way serves as this road between different realities; and it is indeed a metanarrative about roads, e.g. in a novel (not coincidentally) entitled *FR*. The Way evokes a sense of eternal movement between earthly roads and divine roads, and returns us to the contemplation of the divine so pervasive in Okri's work. What differentiates the divine in Okri's novel from the divine of Western theology, however, is both the substitution of creativity for prayer and/or penance, and the importance of 'transformation'.

Higher being, according to the passage above, seems not to be an end in and of itself, but a starting point for infinite transformation, much as the 'becoming' phase of Romantic Irony. The sense of endless possibility and endless transformation springs from a connection to primal forms of creation, the primitive archetypes of existence which, we are told, have to do with the generation of forms themselves, out of chaos. And the notion of divine love provides an ethic by which to generate forms, concerned as it is with individual sacrifice and redemption. We must, however, differentiate

again from a strictly religious sense of these words; redemption here is not so much a religious concept as a creative and spiritual one, finding fulfillment and salvation in the creation of forms, and their subsequent transformation, via temporary chaos, into other forms. What we have here is a dynamic very similar to that in German Romantic Irony, where there is an ongoing dialogue between form and chaos, with neither occupying a dominant position. The fact that the forms of 'being' in question are 'the thought-forms of primal creation', and that divine love leads to an 'understanding of signs' only adds to the Romantic flavour of the passage; if we extrapolate from the character of a follower of The African Way, we can arrive at a portrait of the Romantic artist, who communes with Mother Nature (primal creation) in order to understand and create a language of his own.

Even accepting that The African Way is related to the process of artistic creation, it still seems a rather abstract metaphor for Panafricanism, but we must take into account that it is perhaps deliberately spiritually 'pure' in the face of spiritual and material corruption. The African Way is concerned with spiritual redemption via imaginative means, and this redemption is an aspect of the most idealistic form of Panafricanism; Neil Lazarus, for example, has characterised the Panafrican 'conflation of independence and revolution' as 'messianic' (Lazarus, 1990: 39).[28] This messianic aspect often involved direct political action, but The African Way manifests as the means of finding a more spiritual and psychological redemption, an alternative to the way of the Western Masquerade, which manifests its power in rigid forms, and propagates psychological and material oppression. Azaro tells us,

> The Masquerade's head was a mighty house. It was not one mind, but many; a confluence of minds [...]I saw [...]its mind engineers, spirit-distorters, reality-manufacturers, history-twisters, truth-inventors, soul-transplanters, dream-destroyers, courage-grinders, love-corrupters, hope-crushers, sleep-eaters, hunger-producers, money-farmers [...]What shocked me more than anything else was the uncanny sense

> of order in the kingdom. There was no chaos, no confusion, no alternatives, no dialectic, no disturbances. It was almost peaceful, almost -- paradisial. It was a strange kind of utopia [...]And there was, mostly, silence [...]I saw the invisible Masquerades of the western world, saw their worshippers of order, money, desire, power, and world domination [...]I saw the powers of the Kingdom, how it manufactures reality, how it produces events which will become history, how it creates memory, and silence, and forgetfulness. (114-115)

The Masquerade houses a family of related entities, a corrupted collectivity of minds, and reflects an Africa in the thrall of a Western and/or Westernised control, in which there is 'no chaos [...]no dialectic'. Here form, without its dialectical partner chaos, breeds only oppression, the silence of censorship, a propagandistic, almost Orwellian recreation of memory à la *Animal Farm*.

In the portrayal of the Masquerades we can see the irony of a Western Romantic position being recycled by a post-colonial author, in that the tension here is one of 'evil (Western) technology' versus 'the natural forces of (African) creation'. The evil minds are described as belonging variously to engineers, distorters, manufacturers, transplanters, producers, and money-farmers, among other things. The language points to artificial processes, mechanical manipulation tied to material gain, and even the farmers are not real farmers, but growers of currency. The problem with this opposition, and it is a significant one, is that such rhetoric places Africa in the position of the primal Other to the West's more developed technological self. In opposition to this primal creativity and mysticism of Africa and The African Way, the politics of the Western world encourage 'worshippers of order, money, desire, power, and world domination'. With relation to these incarnations of 'order', Okri in effect forces Africa to play the role of chaotic Other. This may be one reason he later stresses the order found in artistic creation as being vital to the formulation of African identity, though notably Hawley sees Okri's explorations of unorganised chaos as signifying a move from literary modernism to literary post-modernism.[29]

It is difficult to discern whether The African Way is a rejection of corrupt politics, or a refusal to place any faith whatsoever in politics in a material context. In an earlier text, Okri betrays an anxiety about the potential apoliticism of a purely spiritual agenda; his poem 'Political Abiku' emphasises his own desire to apply 'spiritual' matters to a 'political' end.[30] There is, however, a significant political issue raised in these novels; the issue of who has control of images and narratives in a culture. In the novel and its sequel, *SE*, there are two visions of Panafricanism that compete on these grounds; Madame Koto's corrupted Panafricanism, and a more idealised collective striving for unity through creativity and heroic narratives. The novel's tendency to generalise both creative, spiritual vision and Western corruption, while annoying at times, makes it possible to cast it as a classic struggle between good and evil. Like Salman Rushdie, Ben Okri is concerned with the evil narratives that cause confusion and silence in the world, and prevent the collective from achieving a positive sense of destiny. In *HSS*, we have the figure of Khattam-Shud, while in *SE* we once again find Madame Koto, the Masquerades, and an evil blind man.

These figures seem to cause mass hallucinations throughout *SE*, spawning chaos and destructive images of the world. For instance, instead of giving birth to spirit-children, which would be a sign of a positive collective identity, Madame Koto gives birth

> to three baby Masquerades in her dream, children who spent their lives divided, warring against each other, fighting for their mother's milk, savaging her breasts, and tearing her apart in a bizarre, incestuous and greedy rage--while Madame Koto, the new Mother of Images, heaved gently, asleep, on her mighty bronze bed. (142-143)

The Masquerades are images used to create narratives of destruction and disinformation. These images also serve as metaphors for African identity, a failed Panafricanism born of the union between corrupt politics and the chaotic, organic power of Africa; Madame Koto, archetypal mother of Africa

and betrayer of her land, is the 'new Mother of Images'. Instead of giving birth to a spiritual trinity of 'Offspring that could be myths and deities who would extend her powers, offspring worthy of her ancient blood, a blood as old as oral history' (141), Madame Koto brings petty, squabbling triplets to dream-term, babies representative of Africa's divisive, self-destructive condition as a group of individual nation-states with violently conflicting political and ethnic agendas.

The blind man, too, represents interesting aspects of Panafricanism; aside from the obvious blindness that signifies a lack of vision, the nature of the blind man's offspring raises questions about the relationship between African identity and hybridity. After he is reincarnated in a dream, the blind man impregnates himself:

> it grew into a man-woman, and struggled for many generations trying to give birth to itself, to its own destiny [...]The man-woman had delivered several babies who were joined at the hips. They were all different, they had few resemblances, their hues were dissimilar [...] different voices, different eyes, different cries, different dreams, similar ancestry, all jostling, all trapped within the same flesh, pulling in conflicting directions [...]hybridous offspring [...]condemned to wander as one, to build as one, to destroy as one, yet always trying to be separate from one another, always failing, for they were all of one body, one ancient and forgotten ancestry, their destinies linked--in union or division--for ever. (91-92)

After the blind man metamorphoses into a hybrid, hermaphroditic figure, it must 'give birth to itself', a common metaphor for the process of self-determination. If we take the hermaphrodite's children to be individual nations, the vision of Africa put forth here is that of related yet distinct entities; it does not deny difference, even emphasises it, but difference is given a relationship within the familial. Bearing in mind the continuing problem of associating a people with its land, the 'same flesh' in the above passage might be regarded in a literal sense as the continent of Africa; but this vision details a Panafricanism that fails to reconcile its hybrid nature, and so exists in strife and destruction. The irony of its hybridity is the common ancestry each 'child' shares, and the text highlights that irony;

by failing to acknowledge a collectivity and relatedness, i.e. by insisting on individual national autonomy and the continuance of the neocolonial nation-state as a political structure, the 'child-nations' of Africa are doomed to political and spiritual powerlessness. In this context, hybridity would be a potential site of resistance and self-determination, but the agency made possible by hybridity would only exist in a sucessfully negotiated collective form.

The Need For Heroes, The Importance of Love and Narrative

This commitment to collective identity does not, however, eradicate the need for individual identity; on the contrary, the two notions of collectivity and individuality depend upon each other for inspiration and purpose. Azaro realises that this war between The African Way and the Western Masquerade engenders the need for heroes. He declares, 'I would have to fight, to help spread some light [...]till I found a way to incarnate light [...]burning my being away [...]without the certainty of transformation' (116). This passage recalls one in Rushdie's *Shame*, where a boy who is deliberately set alight turns into a flame and burns with redemptive fire. Azaro takes on the responsibility of the hero to spread light, until he himself can become an incarnation of light, despite the risk that he might not be able to regenerate himself if he does not win.

In the tension that exists between those who try to transfix and rigidify the process of transformation, and those who struggle toward the state of being whereby transformation is continuous, heroes are required to swing the balance of destiny towards transformative being. Azaro tells us,

> Through the Masquerade's eyes I understood that there is a war always going on in our night-spaces, a battle between those who become more powerful because of the millions who refuse to be born, refuse to be, and those who *are*, who have been

> born, who carry on becoming, and who bring the dreams of a possible paradise and an incremental light to the earth [...]The Masquerade's kingdom [...]make the other, wiser, forces necessary. They make it more crucial for the great good dreamers and the slow secret realisers of great dreams to be stronger, to hold fast to the difficult light and to transcend themselves and become the legendary hidden heroes who transform the destiny of peoples and nations for the better. (113)

The battle between good and evil, a harmonious Panafricanism and a corrupted politics, may be won by the forces of good if they can summon forth heroic dreams. There are two aspects to this hopefulness which I wish to point out; firstly, the emphasis on dreams and 'night-spaces' again gestures towards the unconscious and imagination, and secondly, mentions of paradise and transcendence coupled with the emphasis on heroic dreamers suggests Africa's need for people who resemble what we have characterised as the Romantic artist-hero. These heroes embrace transcendence, attempting to go beyond their limitations for the good of the collective, which is trapped within a stagnant, powerless form or state. They fulfill the need of the collective for regenerative narratives, or 'dreams'.

Heroes within the novels become allied with visionaries, artists and saviours, and in *FR* and *SE*, Black Tyger is one hero, and Azaro another; both have visions of transformation, and both grow in strength as their quests become more apparent to them. Quayson has noted with particular reference to Black Tyger, that his heroic stature may indicate a turn by Okri towards a masculinist mode of heroism. He also maintains that Madame Koto, though presenting a partial challenge to that masculinist mode, is barred from heroic stature because of her connections with witchcraft, and that her characterisation perhaps embodies an ambivalence experienced by men towards powerful women in Nigerian culture.[31] I would suggest that the emphasis on masculine heroism in the novel is also connected to the tradition of the Romantic artist as the redeemer of society, from which women, as

we discussed in Chapter One, are often excluded. Black Tyger dreams of Christ-like heroes, and relates his vision to his people:

> He sang about those who, in breaking from the chains of fear and centuries, help us break our chains in advance [...]But they do it in advance, he said, with thorns on their head in the darkness which later for us becomes a crown of illumination. (290)

These heroes free themselves from fear, and from time itself, in order to help the collective realise its destiny. Okri evokes the Christian imagery of the crown of thorns on the head of the Saviour, but it is significant that he speaks of many individuals suffering thus, and speaks of them as heroes. In this context, Christ might be viewed as a prototype for the Romantic artist-hero, who heroically invokes a sense of divine imagination to combat the anxiety of an increasingly mechanised society. Black Tyger's heroic individuals suffer in order to bring about another kind of freedom for the collective; they are revolutionary Christ-figures who redeem society through their visions and narratives of unity and empowerment for the physically and economically colonised. It is, after all, no coincidence that Black Tyger sings this story of heroes, invoking the power of the oral poet in order to relate his narrative of heroism. And through the sharing and interpreting of heroic narratives, the crown of thorns on the head of the individual hero becomes a crown of illumination on the head of the collective.

We see Black Tyger gather his power of visionary imagination and interpretation towards the end of the novel, in a vision which contains both a collective ideal, and a message for every individual. Black Tyger

> began the naming of the things of the world as if everything were nothing but a quivering incantation. He named [...]the matted grass which accelerates its growth over the narratives of the continent [...]he named the great luminous crab of the

> African sky, the transformative fish of the watery heavens [...]the star of sacrifice and of vision [...]the star of suffering and of redemption, the star of creativity and of transformation, and the great invisible star of love [...]he spoke of stars and comets as letters of a divine alphabet, letters all scattered and scrambled up in an eternal riddle or enigma -- scrambled up so that each man and woman has to re-order the words they perceive and transmute their own chaos, creating light out of the terrible conundrum of their lives. (277-278)

It is through the act of naming that the hero begins to redefine and reorder the world, as he names the elements of transformation and transcendence. We are encouraged to see the world as a system of narratives involving creativity, sacrifice and vision, suffering and redemption, and transformational love. Here, transformation occurs primarily through the act of creating narratives. The image of the heavens consisting of a divine alphabet which must be reordered to transmute individual chaos is a marvelous metaphor for the power of imaginative narratives to enable positive transformations in life. We are told that this act of reordering and inventing narrative creates light, and that in effect, narrative acts as a vehicle to transcend the circumstances of life and create a better reality. Thus each person carries within him or herself the capacity to be heroic, by committing to the ideals that will produce transformative narratives.

Black Tyger continues his naming, identifying the ongoing process of transformation, and how that process affects identity, particularly African identity:

> he named [...] all the curiously valuable lower forms that destroyed wood, carvings, statues, our paper, our histories, making it necessary for us to invent a science best suited for our continent, making it imperative that we be perpetually creative [...]self-inventors who have to re-dream the world anew because it is always passing away [...] a people who have to create paper which the termites won't eat, narratives that the ants somehow recreate in their devouring, histories that don't become fixed only into written or spoken words, stories that are re-invented in each new generation, myths that always live because they are always allowed to die, melodies that spring from the same unchanging source of the redemptive heart. (278)

Ironically, the lower life forms most enable the creation of a fluid African identity; they destroy documents, artifacts and written histories, necessitating a perpetual creativity on the part of the African people, who are described as 'self-inventors who have to re-dream the world anew'.

This re-dreaming is very reminiscent of a statement by *Shame*'s narrator, who muses that perhaps Pakistan was 'insufficiently imagined'. Of course, one must consider that many nations have collectively re-envisaged their past and their future, and that this process has also then been used to justify genocidal atrocities in the name of patriotic nationalism. The emphasis here, however, seems to be against redreaming any one definitive vision of a collective. For Okri, this process gathers strength from its perpetually transformative nature, while for Rushdie the process seems more a patch-work of putting together disparate elements in a hodge-podge of hybrid language and puns, 'palimpsests' of history and fiction layered over one another.

Both authors have a fascination with and a commitment to literature as a secular answer to God and purely religious transcendence; their faith in narrative and in the power of love is part of this commitment. Rushdie is probably more ironic about romantic love than Okri, but both value the galvanization of spirit that love seems to engender in those who experience it. There is a recognition that such love has its ridiculous side, as per the example of Prince Bolo in *HSS*, and to a lesser degree Black Tyger's sometimes comic attempts to win back the love of his wife in *SE*. Black Tyger becomes a kind of Don Quixote, an ironic Romantic hero whose visions of passion and glory will always exceed his abilities to carry them to fulfillment. In contrast, we have Azaro's spiritual struggle to love the world of the Living, despite the frequent occurrence in that world of despair, carnage and betrayal.

There are other parallels between *SE* and *HSS*, evoked in the above passage by the notion of

the ants that recreate history in devouring it. Likewise, we saw that the plenty-maw fish were also in the business of regenerating and synthesising narratives by digesting older narratives from the ocean's 'original source', and creating new hybrid stories from them. Azaro, too, speaks of 'melodies that spring from the unchanged source of the redemptive heart', oddly echoing Rushdie's novel. The similarity lies in a reference to original and unchanging sources, which here seem to be metaphors for human imagination and dreams.

If stories can indeed, 'make the heart bigger', and these narratives come from what could be described as an archetypal heart, there would seem to be a dialectic whereby the source gives forth narratives, and simultaneously is replenished by that act of giving. The heart is characterised as 'redemptive', both redeemed and redeeming, recovered and enabling recovery. This dual sense of 'redemptive' captures the sense of dialectical interaction between the heroic individual and the collective. The hero 'recovers' from a stagnant state of existence, and redeems for the collective an 'incremental light'. In turn, the need and the promise of an even greater light spurs the hero to action, as well as the fact that the 'forces of darkness' are always trying to destroy the hero's light.

In the battle between good and evil, light and darkness, which we see also in *HSS*, heroes act by speaking. Ade tells Azaro, '"One great action [...]can change the history of the world"' (294). In this context, heroes create narratives to combat and counter the oppressive silence and disinformation propagated by corrupt politicians, and heroes are motivated to bravery by a love which has to be won back through sacrifice. To fulfill the conditions of their sacrifice, they must endure the temporary loss of order, that they may re-order and recreate their narratives and the narratives of the world, all the while knowing that those narratives will in turn be betrayed and destroyed. Most importantly in these novels, heroes must possess a love for the collective and for other individuals

with whom they share their narratives and visions, because it is earthly love whose catalysing effect leads to higher states of transformational being.

Throughout *SE*, Azaro is told various stories with morals to them, and in one of the most significant, told to him by his mother, love is characterised as a beneficent force that can transcend even death. When one of the characters in the story asks, '"How can you kill Death?"' he receives the reply, '"With love."' (76) And Azaro's father tells him the story of a man who will die from a mosquito's bite at dawn if he does not renounce his determination to be good. When the time comes for him to die, he is not afraid, because,

> 'love is the real power. And where there is love there is no fear [...]But I am not going to die', said the man [...]then pointed to the birds and the animals and the human beings gathered round him. 'Because [...]I have given them my life. I used to be one. Now, I am many. They will become more. How many of us can you kill?' When dad finished there was a silvery silence. Then, in a different voice, he said: 'Stories can conquer fear, you know. They can make the heart bigger'. (46)

In both these stories, sacrificial love is put forth as a force which counters death and fear; love leads to redemption and a kind of immortality, because it enables the individual to participate in an enduring collective.

In his essay 'Fables are Made of This', Okri emphasises the role love will play in revitalising the collective,[32] and as the narrator and main hero of *FR* and *SE*, the task Azaro the spirit-child must perform has to do with revitalising these collective

> histories that mustn't be forgotten, stories that must be told [...]possibilities that must be discovered [...]all the thousand permutations of love that must be incarnated and kept whole and regenerated every day of our lives. (*SE*, 258)

In Okri's novels, the hero is responsible for embodying and keeping joy and love alive in the world;

he does so in the face of possible annihilation by the forces that oppose humanity's infinite potential for empowerment. Perhaps the most consistent force driving his narratives is the search for endless alternatives and possible permutations, the desire to reorder and recreate for Africa what has been distorted by an oppressive regime of colonial and neo-colonial Western politics. The Romantic hero has an ironic place in this literature; the power associated with Romantic artistic vision (admittedly tailored to a new context) can perhaps rise to the challenge of re-dreaming the identity of a whole continent.

As with Rushdie, part of Okri's heroic textual redreaming for the individual involves the negotiation of hybridity. Azaro is an inherently hybrid being, travelling as he does between two worlds, and in *SE*, Okri provides us with many images of African identity which turn to the metaphor of hybridity for empowerment. The town beggars rush to defend Black Tyger when he is being beaten:

> They kicked and bit and punched whatever was in their way, till the mountainous tumble became a frenzied hybridous animal of many limbs tortured by its insanity [...]beggars were sprawled around [Black Tyger] like gigantic insects in mid-transformation [...]We hurried [...]through a sepia fog thick with hybrid beings [...]and when I looked up I saw that there were gigantic spirits everywhere [...]I knew instantly that they belonged to the slow migration of the great spirits of Africa. (19, 25, 26)

The beggars are able to momentarily access the hybridising powers of the spirits of Africa, and come to their hero's defense. In 'Identity, Alterity and Ambiguity in a Nigerian Community: Competing Definitions of "True" Islam', Masquelier maintains that the animalisation of the other is an indication of the sorcerous nature of the animalised, who are identified with evil spirits,[33] but in doing so she overlooks the positive qualities of transformation that may be represented by animalisation in an

aesthetic medium, particularly as Okri uses it here. It is no coincidence that these 'hybrid beings' belong to a 'slow migration' of spirits; in Rushdie's work, we saw how the notion of migration was tied to the migrant and hybrid sensibility. As Boehmer notes, the idea of the migrant text is, 'hybridity writ large and in colour. It is a hybridity, too, which is form-giving, lending meaning to the bewildering array of cultural translations which migrants must make' (Boehmer, 1995: 234). Likewise in Okri's fiction, migration is part of the transformative process whereby a thing changes its image by engaging in a process of perpetual movement beyond itself. Such movement on a collective scale results in the hybrid and 'feverish narratives' of Africa, and represents the potential for empowerment through a form-giving Panafricanism.

On an individual level, Azaro has his own feverish combination of narratives to contemplate. His spirit-sponsored education consists of bodies of knowledge from all cultures, resulting in a psychological hybridity and relativity of culture. He informs us:

> [The spirits] filled me with images of Zimbabwean rock paintings and Nordic gods, with Luo proverbs, Ashante songs, and Byzantine melodies, with Zulu epics and stories of ancient, forgotten heroes [...]Yes, those relentless spirit-companions of mine poured into me the prophecies of Nostradamus and the wild visions of African mystics and the theories of Pythagoras [...]Meanwhile I walked barefoot in a world breaking down under the force of hunger. (5, 6)

This chaotic collage of information contributes to Azaro's hybrid sensibility, and it is no surprise that a significant portion of that sensibility is filled with 'forgotten heroes', 'prophecies' and 'visions' from both Western and non-Western sources. Such things appear at odds with Azaro's everyday experiences, and would seem to undercut these spirit-sponsored heroic visions, but here irony only highlights the need for the 'material' to be transformed by such visions.

Hybridity is also a survival response for the hero, to the dangers of the culture in which he

lives. When his own mother faces danger because of the itinerant political oppression of Madame Koto and her thugs, Azaro is forced to rediscover his own transformative nature:

> they lifted their guns and shot down all the living dreams of the nation. The darkness flowed around them and around me, and I understood the secret of living within the body of the leviathan-spirit of our age. With no choice, resorting to the freedom of the world of spirits, I began to mutate. I turned into a fish [...]a butterfly [...]a lizard [...]For an instant I had rediscovered the powers of transformation locked in my spirit and in my will, powers that only came awake because mum was moving deeper into the long room. (43)

These transformative mutations occur as a result of Azaro revitalising his hybrid nature, in order to combat the powers of evil. This is perhaps a good opportunity to highlight the fact that Azaro's mutations occur in response to two things; a realisation of the apocalyptic state of the age, and the loss of his mother. Both, as we have delineated in the introduction, are 'classic' imaginative triggers for the Romantic artist-hero.

In these novels, we see an ethic of faith in love and in the endless creation and regeneration of narratives; by his belief in these things the individual may attain a greater light, and become heroic. This ethic certainly possesses a noble quality; it would, however, be remiss not to point out that these novels also seem haunted by a false nostalgia for authenticity and wholeness. At their worst, populist cousins of this nostalgia can be found in self-help manuals which use rhetoric such as 'universal love' and 'the child within'. If there is a 'redeeming' feature of Okri's particular nostalgia, it is that the notion of authenticity put forth here would seem to consist of an infinite, hybridised shape-shifting, not unlike Rushdie's descriptions of the migrant sensibility.

To Okri's credit, he attaches most of his spiritual rhetoric to a sense of Africa's developmental destiny, though he tends to generalise a bit repetitively about the evils of the Western hemisphere.

Furthermore, the sweeping solution proposed by The African Way does not necessarily take into account the diversity of peoples and cultures within Africa. Any application of this ideal would have to operate with the stricture that one group's imaginative transformation would inevitably take a different shape than another's. An emphasis that lay upon cooperation against exploitation would be much more ideologically palatable than one that stressed 'unity' among cultures whose singularity might be threatened by the implied idea of unification that lies at the heart of this rhetoric. In one sense, the problem may simply be one of language, and Okri may need to examine more closely the implications of using words like 'unified' and 'whole' in an overly Romantic fashion, although as Barthold notes, there exists a potential incompatibility between the kind of heroic strength needed to be a visionary and a rebel, and the condition of fragmentation.[34]

One worrying aspect of these texts is that the sense of spirituality portrayed within them seems to repeat the dynamic of the Romantic subject who wishes to merge with the objective natural world; in this case, donning the spirit of Africa, its natural, organic, collective power, provides the subject with the ability to imaginatively transform himself. We must certainly ask if the post-colonial subject's desire to merge with the objective world to achieve transformation is any less outdated in a post-colonial context, than the Romantic subject's desire to merge with the objective world to achieve transcendence would be today in a Western text.

In Okri's defence, I must point out that the question just posed may not possess validity within the context of African literature and culture in general. By this, I mean to acknowledge that what we regard as subject-object relations and the quest for imaginative transcendence may not 'compute' sufficiently within an African culture whose beliefs still include such things as a co-existent spirit-world, witchcraft, etc.[35] Wole Soyinka, for instance, maintains that 'in a culture where the mystical

and the visionary are merely areas of reality like any other, the use of such expressions does not connote a higher perception of the imaginative faculty' (Soyinka, 1976: 65-66).[36] When a 'Westernised' idea of imagination and the fantastical meets a particular 'non-Western' context where the 'fantastical' and the 'imaginary' are, in an important cultural sense, regarded as 'reality' or 'realism', or where the spirit-world and the 'real' world seem to overlap, it is difficult to judge the validity or effectiveness of such an idea in post-colonial literature without seeming completely ethnocentric. Boehmer, for instance, notes that Okri's use of the supernatural expresses the mystery which is part of everyday life.

It may, in fact, be a particularly effective post-colonial strategy to utilise an 'esoteric realism' to disturb the impulse towards teleological interpretation associated with Western narratives of realism.[37] Okri himself, when asked to define 'realism', evokes exactly this esoteric dimension: realism is 'All that's there. What we see and what we don't see. The visible, the invisible'.[38] For Okri, realism is constituted in part by the unknowable, that which lies beyond the immediately visible world, e.g. what is usually associated in Western narratives with the fantastical. Having enunciated this difficulty, it may be best to discuss this issue in terms of individual elements of the Romantic paradigm, and their similarities and differences within this post-colonial context.

One significant point of divergence between the two contexts may lie in the collective nature of the objective world put forth in the post-colonial context, as opposed to the Romantic object of (M)other Nature, who is by and large represented as a single entity. However, as we have seen with the figure of Madame Koto, metaphors for the Panafrican collective may just as easily objectify woman as Nature. If post-colonial uses of these types of strategies are not to duplicate the limitations of the Romantic paradigm, they must certainly strive to redefine subjectivity and its relation to the

objective world.

One similarity of Okri's post-colonial heroic individual to his Romantic counterpart is that he is bound to the collective; however, for the former, alienation from the collective is seen as a negative condition, rather than the latter's almost necessary precursor to creativity and individualism. Like Wordsworth's poet in *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads*, he is different in degree to his fellow man, rather than different in kind;[39] he is a microcosm of his culture, and finds his identity as a reflection of the collective identity. However, Okri's post-colonial artist-hero is arguably less stable than his Romantic counterpart, since as many critics have noted, Okri's characters are often psychologically fragmented, a condition intended to mirror a certain cultural fragmentation.[40] This fragmentation is not necessarily seen as a positive condition; the esoteric mystery that typifies Azaro's existence is necessary to heal the fragmented consciousness of the collective, recalling what Okri has written elsewhere about the need in 'a broken age' for 'mystery and a reawakened sense of wonder [...]in order to be whole again' (Okri, 1997: 125). Azaro's fragmented condition correlates with Africa's, and he represents Africa's potential for fulfilling its heroic destiny by becoming a spiritual collective; thus Azaro's own creativity is less self-centred, less 'pleased with his own passions and volitions' (ed. Abrams, 1993: 147), and more concerned with placing those passions in the service of redeeming the collective. Indeed, as Quayson highlights, the abiku is keenly aware of its community's values, and represents these values microcosmically throughout the novel.[41] Barthold further notes that in African literature, individual and community are inseparable: 'redemption for the individual always involves redemption for the community' (Barthold, 1980: 79). Through Black Tyger's vision, we see the parallel between Azaro on a microcosmic level, and Africa on a macrocosmic level; both Azaro and Africa are abiku, or spirit children, and in *FR*, Azaro tells us

> In his journeys Dad found that all nations are children; it shocked him that ours too was an abiku nation, a spirit-child nation, one that keeps being reborn and after each birth come blood and betrayals, and the child of our will refuses to stay till we have made propitious sacrifice and displayed our serious intent to bear the weight of a unique destiny. (494)

If Azaro can summon the courage to stay in the land of the living, then Africa, too, has a hope of being born into its destiny. The African nation exists as the abiku-child of the people's collective will, but it refuses to achieve its historical destiny until its people heroically accept the sacrifices that come with the responsibility of that unique birth. Unfortunately, the differentiation between a nineteenth century Romantic hero and a post-colonial Romantic hero may not ultimately lead to any differentiation in terms of a corresponding collective; the narrator's call for a 'unique destiny' echoes typical nationalistic, neocolonial justifications for the establishment of individual nation-states.

In this last point of discussion we may find a key motivation for Okri's more emphatic emphasis on the spiritual rather than the 'material political'. His often zen-like conception of and insistence upon spiritual consciousness provides a safeguard for rhetoric which at times resembles a call to nationalism. In the words of Michel Foucault,

> It's not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera, for truth is already power) but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time. (Foucault, 1980: 133)[42]

This detachment of power from forms of hegemony seems exactly what Okri exemplifies in his narratives, and he does so in order to create the basis of a viable African identity. The turn to African spirituality in this context is a means of detaching the power of truth from oppressive political institutions, and placing it in the hands of those who have the courage to create transformative narratives. The awkwardness of defining 'truth' is then relegated to the realm of representation; the

construction of constantly evolving fictions and interpretations. This then translates into a major role for the artist (as a creator of transformative interpretations and fictions) as 'truth-giving' hero. The aesthetic accordingly becomes politicised when transformational narratives are seen as the means of resistance to hegemonic narratives of control and oppression, i.e. the often violent narratives of nationalism. King, for instance, notes in African literature, 'the increasing use of myth as a means of offering imaginative order where nationalism had brought disorder' (King, 1980: 30).

It must be acknowledged, however, that there is an intrinsic difficulty in differentiating the spiritual from the political in the context of an African culture in which the two are often inseparable. Barthold points out that traditionally, the political leader of a tribe, 'the chief or king--was also a spiritual leader' (Barthold, 1981: 12). In that sense, Okri's move towards a more spiritual notion of empowerment can be seen as a turn back toward more traditional forms of tribal governance, in which the spiritual and the political are brought into harmony with one another. This movement back toward a more traditional sense of harmony between the spiritual and the political is not incongruous with the detachment of power from forms of hegemonic governance; indeed, insofar as the hegemony draws its continuity from neocolonial forms of government, it may be complementary, although it must be said that the relations between tribes may be no less violent than the relations between nations.

Dangerous Love, or Portrait of the Artist as a Reluctant Hero[43]

With *Dangerous Love* (1996), his latest novel which is a reworking of an earlier novel, *The Landscapes Within* (1981), Okri manages to balance between Romantic ideals about art and love, and the material political concerns that affect and oppose art and love. The dark, brutal politics of a

military government serve to ironise and undercut the more transcendent moments of the novel, moments that occur within artistic and amorous reveries. The role of art is debated in the novel, and the main character Omovo, himself an artist, asks whether art is self-indulgent, or capable of genuine transformation. He speculates about the redemptive power of art, and to what extent redemption comes from the act of creation and the establishment of meaningful patterns to life, and/or the remembering and recording of injustices. Through the interplay between art and life, Omovo discovers how the oppressive political structures within Nigeria create the need for a personal artistic response. The creation of art and love becomes part of a necessary stand against political oppression and suppression, and the only hope of temporarily transforming life into an expression of the truth, i.e. to identify the truth of oppression becomes a form of resistance to oppression.

From the beginning of the novel, the temporary, contingent nature of artistic transformation is made apparent. At the start of Omovo's emergence and rebirth from a 'long dry season' (5), his disturbing sketch of local, poverty-ridden children is ironically stolen from him to be sold for tourist money. The painting he exhibits of the ghetto's scum-pool is confiscated by the military police who have come to the exhibition to ensure there is no subversive artistic activity in the form of negative portrayals of Nigeria. Both of these incidents highlight the continuing struggle between the artist's personal battle to acknowledge and redeem injustice, and the hegemony's desire to silence or absorb any awareness of the injustices they help to perpetrate. The fact that Omovo's fellow ghetto-dweller is driven by his poverty to steal and sell Omovo's sketch of the ghetto's destitution for (Western) tourist money, can be seen as an ironic suggestion that the only commodity the Nigerian underclass possesses is (the portrayal of) its own disenfranchisement.

In the face of such betrayal, Omovo wonders to what end art can serve the greater good, and

discovers his responsibility, as an artist, to his people. But before this awareness can blossom, he must be confronted with the potential emptiness of art and theories about art. At the exhibition, we are party to snatches of 'text-book theories on the derivations and healthiness of modern African art', and we are told that 'Art theories stung Omovo's ears': '"It explodes in the brain with visual impacts of predominant red [...] something of a pioneer in giving visual lacerations to apocalyptic motifs"' (34, 35). Omovo nearly implodes with despair himself at the meaningless jargon filling the room. Such theories for him set hollow aesthetic goals for African art, and do not strike to the heart of spiritual and political experience. Inevitably, the 'truest' painting, Omovo's portrayal of the scum-pool, the creation of which Kofi Owusu calls 'both protest and therapy' (Owusu, 1991: 155)[44] is confiscated by government soldiers.

It is a further irony that the critics at the gallery wish to thrust Romantic aesthetics to the fore; 'apocalyptic motifs', Romantic symbols of revolution and forthcoming change, are here turned into theoretical psychobabble. Considering that Okri's work may be described as apocalyptic (and indeed, it has been referred to as 'quasi-apocalyptic' (Quayson, 1997: 112) -- which is perhaps an understatement given the violence and destruction Okri depicts throughout so much of his fiction), this is a sad indictment of what might become of the revolutionary potential of Okri's own work when subjected to the critical gaze. Okri's narrator seems to disapprove not of the Romantic aesthetic, but rather of a hollow theoretical critique of this aesthetic. The influence of Romanticism remains significant within the context of African literature, and particularly within the context of Okri's work, with its focus on making aesthetics into a kind of politics; King, for example, maintains that in Africa, aestheticism was actually a product of the Romantic movement.[45]

Through his experiences, Omovo discovers that life can be drained of meaning and sense; as

a counterpoint to the meaninglessness of theories, Omovo observes, '"Life has no pattern and no threads. Is it futile trying to weave something through this maze?"' (57) It is a question he will ask over and over again throughout the novel, particularly after he discovers a young girl's murdered, mutilated body in the park. His helplessness,and the sense that an artistic response 'seemed futile' (50), drive him to search within himself for answers to the atrocities he observes. In part he finds an answer in his adulterous, yet temporarily redemptive love for Ifeyiwa, who inspires and rejuvenates him, but his artistic yearning proves an even stronger answer to injustice and pointlessness, as Ifeyiwa passes out of his life, and he has only his art left to compensate him: 'It became a way to explore the hidden meanings of his life and to come to terms with the miasmic landscapes about him' (68-9). His life takes on meaning when he becomes a creator, particularly a self-creator, exploring his own secret patterns and how he fits into the confusion he sees around him.

Part of this artistic self-exploration and self-definition takes the form of a very recognisable Romantic discourse about the need for visions and dreams. However, this discourse has a constant counterpoint in the novel, in the shape of reminders to observe and record the ugly and cruel aspects of life, particularly as they relate to the ongoing torments of Nigeria's underclass. Omovo's mentor, Dr. Okocha, tells him to look at 'ugly things', to face their truth with the help of the 'mirror' of art; but this mirror, far from being purely mimetic, is a mirror that reflects the imagination, one that makes 'manifest the good dreams, the visions, that we are given' (101). Omovo is haunted by the image of the dead girl, and he feels the need '"to leave some sort of record that I witnessed it."' (97) But his need is inextricable from the yearning for living colours, landscapes vibrant with harmonies. Hence Omovo 'yearned for art, for sustaining memories, for memories of vision' (169), and in one of Omovo's epiphanic moments, we are told that he 'felt himself submerge, felt himself journeying at

a strange speed through primeval caves [...] He prayed that he could reach greater powers, greater visions and the intimations of a greater life that flowed somewhere in the landscapes within (170). It is only through this notably 'primeval', subterranean experience of the imaginative 'landscape within' that Omovo is capable of summoning the vision necessary to sustain the memory of the murdered girl and other instances of 'the ugly truth'.

Through the cultivation of imaginative vision, Omovo strives to be the perfect Romantic artist. He wants 'to awaken the emotions and the inexpressible states' he feels, to give voice to the sublime. He knows that

> the artist is nothing but a higher servant, a labourer, a mediator, a carpenter of visions, a channel [...] The highest function of art was to make people feel more, see more, feel more fully, see more truthfully. (204)

Romantic imagination, as delineated by Omovo, will save the people from their dull and mechanised reality. Okri's Christ-like 'carpenter of visions' will redeem his fellow humans by communing with the divine and reawakening their emotional and visionary faculties. This is done by creating an artwork that expresses the truth about the people's oppression in such a fashion as to inspire them to rise above and against that oppression. But Omovo constantly doubts his own capacity for vision; just as he seems to find it, the vision eludes him again, and he is deposited back in the land of snobbish art critics and boorish, corrupt bosses who dehumanise him with empty words and empty tasks.

Similarly, throughout the novel, Romantic reverie is undercut by images of harsh reality; joyful epiphany is followed by the knowledge of horror and apocalyptic destruction, though here apocalypse is concretised in images of civil war:

> he experienced a sudden sufflation, an expansion of being, and he had a momentary wordless sensation of the underlying unity of things [...] Omovo's heart palpitated with a wild joy. He felt his being include all that was hidden and radiant in the world.

> The feeling came unexpectedly, like a revelation. Then just as unexpectedly his meditation changed. He remembered the girl in the park [...]He saw the nation in riot, in the grip and fever of revolution. He saw flames everywhere, saw structures tumbling down, ghettoes burning. (196-197)

For every image of creation, the novel supplies an image of powerful destruction. Flights of imagination are counterbalanced by references to history in the shape of the Nigerian civil war or in the horrors of a 'peace-time' murder, haunting references that recur throughout the novel.

This alternating pattern of joy and despair is manifest even in the title of Okri's first novel, *Flowers and Shadows* (1980). Its main character, Jeffia, experiences rapid mood swings from optimistic happiness to deep pessimism and melancholia, and finally back again to a potentially redemptive optimism. This cyclical movement, which Barthold identifies in African literature with a rejection of Western history,[46] resurfaces in the emphasis placed on transformation in his later novels, and the alternating patterns of creation and destruction, or order and chaos, present in *DL*. Significantly, just such an emphasis on the journey through chaos to order, and an acceptance of destruction as a part of creation, is found in the Yoruba Ogun myth. In this myth, Ogun must journey 'through chaos to find a pathway between the gods and man' (King, 1980: 91). Okri does not use this myth explicitly; rather, it seems to be an implicit presence within his work, embodied by the abiku, and in *DL*, by the artist. Both act as intermediaries who negotiate a way between different levels of reality, and bring much-needed order to a chaotic situation by sacrificing themselves to the process of creation. Wole Soyinka, whose writing can be seen to have distinctly influenced Okri, ties the Ogun myth to both the creative journey of the artist and the metaphor of the road.[47] In fact, in 1967, Soyinka was criticised for his 'attempt to retrieve or refunction an essentially Romantic [...]Western [...]conception of artists as the 'unacknowledged legislators' of the world' (Lazarus,

1990: 205). The same criticism raised by Soyinka's detractors might be levelled at Okri, if their evaluation were to focus solely upon the 'Western' aspect of his Romantic tendencies. I hope to subsequently suggest that such a one-sided evaluation is impossible when considering the Romantic elements in Okri's texts.

The Romantic rhetoric in *DL* comes to a climax when the alternating structure of optimism and despair, creation and destruction, merges in a single, epiphanic revelation. Omovo experiences an 'illumination', which he triumphantly articulates as "'THE MOMENT!'" (293) about his true destiny and responsibility as an artist in the world. It is within this angry, determined insight that what he battles against and for is named:

> they scrambled for our continent and now we scramble for the oil-burst of Independence [...]The smiles of the rich grow more predatory [...] Total self-transformation--we burn for vision [...]Vison allied with action [...]In vision begins action [...]The bitterness in us should long have festered and turned to acid and turned round into the sweetness of transformation [...]The creative dangers of thinking in an imposed language [...]Erased from history [...]As children, we read how the whites discovered us--didn't we exist till they discovered us?--weighed down by manipulated history [...]Believing those lies [...]But chaos is the beginning of creation. (293-294)

Like Azaro in *FR*, Omovo reveals anger and concern over oil-mad corruption, white imperialism through material and linguistic colonisation, neo-colonial repetitions of imperialism, the frustrated need for transformation, and his people's erasure from their own history and their distorted insertion into 'white' history. But he also regards this anger and chaos as the potential starting point for a new order which will recreate Africa's stolen, obscured history. His task is to create this new world.

The Difficulty of Evaluation

It is difficult to evaluate the use of 'realism' as opposed to the 'fantastical', or the 'imaginative',

in a non-Western literature that seeks to replace material history with a (perhaps more culturally appropriate) mythic, spiritual history. The 'ancestors of the spirit-world' certainly appear to have a fantastical dimension, while historical events such as the Nigerian civil war seem to correspond more to the dimension of realism, but Okri would most likely argue that the spirit-world is as much a reality as civil war. As we have noted, the spiritual and the political are traditionally intertwined in this non-Western context, to the point that political realities have spiritual repercussions.

The question arises, should we even seek to impose interpretive strategies on texts that, in Boehmer's terms, represent a kind of 'spiritual realism', and are

> ultimately not fully accessible to the European or American reader [...][Because] when representing the mystical or the phantasmic, postcolonial writers elect to withdraw their work, in part, from the hermeneutic space of the West [...]Postcolonial writers like Okri [...]at times introduce an *un*translatable strangeness into their work, so emphasizing its borderline situation, positioned both within and without Western traditions. (242-243)

Such texts may be constructed with a 'natural immunity' to Western interpretive strategies, turning to the spiritual and the mystical in order to confound analysis and appropriation. Such a strategy is reflective of what may need to occur in a 'material' context, i.e. the expulsion of certain Western methods of political organisation and strategy. Critics such as Bardolph, who stress the allegorical dimension to *FR*, are in danger of ignoring this.[48] Although there is an allegorical quality to the novel, if we read *FR* simply as a political allegory, we risk missing much of what is being said in the novel about the importance of spirituality. Likewise, to label Okri's work as magical realism is to impose a difference between magic and reality which may not be valid in the context of a work such as *FR*.[49]

When evaluating post-colonial literature, especially in relation to what can be considered 'fantastical' in a given context, these are all issues with which must be considered. Western ideas of

the fantastical cannot simply be imposed within a context where what is regarded by Western eyes as 'fantastical' may actually be considered a 'reality'. We must also regard with suspicion our preferences for either 'real' characters whose quotidian lives resemble ours, or 'fantastical' characters who represent an enticing sense of difference and/or otherness. Finally, perhaps we must risk accepting 'mysticism' or 'the spiritual' or 'mythic consciousness' in the place of 'the material'; and 'Romantic' flights of 'transcendence' in the place of 'material politics'. Perhaps a 'Western' critic may only highlight the potential problems such uses of spirituality, mysticism and myth might create, e.g. that the language used to express the wish for a mythic, spiritual history sometimes resembles the coloniser's absolutist, nation-building rhetoric.

Though some might see no problem in appropriating Okri as a 'Western writer',[50] I must concede that with regard to the work of Okri and perhaps other post-colonial writers, 'Romantic Irony' is at best a Western term being used to describe ironic aspects of non-Western *mythoi* (in the sense that Northrop Frye uses the term). Insofar as the structure of romance that lies behind the romantic is based upon the structure of myth, however,[51] the term 'Romantic Irony' might still have validity when applied to an African post-colonial literary text, if, for example, that text is based upon myth. In this post-colonial context, however, the term 'Romantic Irony' should be regarded as having a slightly different focus upon the word 'Romantic', because of the difficulties within that context in discerning between 'realism' and 'the fantastical', as noted above. Within this context, a critical approach must also consider whether a given use of myth is to be regarded as a mode of realism or a mode of the fantastical. For example, do we regard the use of the abiku myth in Okri's work as reflecting a mode of the fantastical, or a mode of realism, or both? As Elleke Boehmer comments on the representation of the city in one of Okri's short stories, 'Lagos is *at once* a cultic

zone of supernatural derangement [...]*and* the dumping ground of the world's discards' (Boehmer, 1995: 242). Similarly, we may regard the violence triggered by the Masquerades as hallucinatory and fantastical, or a representation of 'the extreme violence and corruption that entered Nigerian politics with independence' (King, 1980: 62). Realism becomes intertwined with the fantastical to the point where they must be taken as part of the same 'reality'.

I began this chapter by asserting potential grounds for criticism in the fact that Okri's work sometimes lacks a balance between the Romantic and the ironic; I must end it in the disruptive spirit of Romantic Irony, by acknowledging the precarious position and possible invalidity of such a criticism within the context in question. As a critical position in and of itself, however, Romantic Irony may be a useful 'space' for the critic to occupy, specifically because of its tenet that whatever is created must inevitably be destroyed and created anew. Critiques involving issues of difference, the Other and otherness might benefit by a theoretical perspective that allows its own conclusions to be questioned and overturned. Such a perspective creates a space within which the critic may approach these issues ethically, knowing s/he must eventually destroy his or her own opinions about difference; opinions about what is after all, by 'definition', undecidable. Romantic Irony may find its significance in dialogues about such issues because its endless cycle of creation and destruction precludes the possibility of drawing 'conclusions'. We have already noted similarities between Romantic Irony and the Ogun myth that predates it. Perhaps, given this resemblance, we might view Romantic Irony as a Western mode of criticism that functions according to principles previously found in indigenous myth.

Postscript: A Persistent Criticism

Having accepted that we must sometimes defer to 'mysticism', there is one recurrent nightmare in *DL* that remains disturbing, because it seems to construct woman as an embodiment of the land. When Omovo finally does paint the murdered girl, she seems to become a symbol for an Africa that has been raped and murdered:

> She was like a hallucination, a dreamed being, in a naturalistic landscape. A beautiful, bloodied, intensely coloured being. Her dress is torn. There is blood on her breasts, on her clothes. The area of her upper thighs is a stylised mess of mutilation [...]His inability to give the girl a face seemed to be driving him out of his mind. (314)

It is significant that he cannot give the girl a face, and that she is like a hallucination in a naturalistic landscape. The mutilated girl becomes a stand-in for the sublime in its darker mode; she 'presents' the unrepresentable, i.e. the unnameable, unspeakable presence that overwhelms and terrifies the Romantic artist, and inspires him to create in order to name and transform his experience into some manageable form, rather than be subsumed and obliterated by the object of his vision. Boehmer notes that Okri 'takes the view that the suffering associated with colonial occupation and consequent cultural conflict may ultimately be regenerative' (Boehmer, 1995: 241). Okri himself comments on 'how the artist can organise that chaos within the order of an artistic endeavor',[52] experiencing horrors in order to give meaning to them and make them bearable. Okri employs the meta-narrative of the artistic act to further emphasise the need for this artistic redemption; Okri the writer uses the character of Omovo the painter to exemplify the need to create redemptive, artistic forms, while at the same time creating an artistic form himself (i.e. the novel).

While there is a need to attest to atrocity, to bear witness to overwhelming horror and injustice, there is no need to exploit the female figure to do so. Though David Richards might see

the use of a mutilated body in Okri's work as expressive of how post-colonial subjects are always misrepresented,[53] we cannot ignore the implications this particular body has with regard to issues of gender representation. Perhaps partly because of this exploitation of the female figure, the focus of the novel turns more indulgently to the artist himself, as creator and redeemer; perhaps it is no coincidence, then, that Okri ends the novel with an 'Author's Note', in which he expresses his need to 'redeem' the artistic inadequacies of *The Landscapes Within* by rewriting it as *DL*.

Elsewhere in the novel, the gender traps of the Romantic paradigm are also evident; again, the mother (a figure of strength and goodness in memory) is lost, having died some years before. (In general, killing off promising female characters seems to be par for the course in (male) post-colonial versions of the Romantic; most of Rushdie's female characters do not survive until the end of the novel, and Ifeyiwa, the main female character in *DL*, has also died by the end of the novel, after trying unsuccessfully to return to her village.) It is perhaps no coincidence that Omovo's painting of the murdered girl is entitled 'Related Losses', since both the loss of his mother and the loss of the girl seem to symbolise for him the unhealed wounds of the land and its people. It is disappointing, however powerful the imagery, to find that the fate of the land is played out artistically upon the body of 'Woman'; for all Okri's rhetoric about vision, in this instance he seems woefully blind to this particular aspect.

1. T. J. Cribb, 'Transformations in the Fiction of Ben Okri', in *From Commonwealth to Post-Colonial,* ed. by Anna Rutherford (Sydney: Dangaroo Press, 1992), pp. 145-51.

2. Charles E. Nnolim, *Approaches to the African Novel: Essays in Analysis* (London: Saros, 1992). See in particular, 'Ben Okri: Writer as Artist', pp. 173-89.

3. Alistair Niven, 'Achebe and Okri: Contrasts in the Response to Civil War', in *Short Fiction in the New Literatures in English,* ed. by Jacqueline Bardolph (Nice: Fac. Des Lettres et Sciences Humaines, 1989), pp. 277-85.

4. Olatubosun Ogunsanwo, 'Intertextuality and Post-Colonial Literature in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*', *Research in African Literatures*, 26(1), (Spring 1995), 40-52.

5. Ato Quayson, *Strategic Transformations in Nigerian Writing: Orality and History in the Work of Rev. Samuel Johnson, Amos Tutuola, Wole Soyinka and Ben Okri* (Oxford: James Currey, and Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997).

6. John C. Hawley, 'Ben Okri's Spirit-Child: Abiku Migration and Postmodernity', *Research in African Literatures*, 26(1), (Spring 1995), pp. 30-39.

7. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., 'Between the Living and the Unborn', *New York Times Book Review*, 13 August 1989, pp. 3, 20.

8. Nnolim, *Approaches to the African Novel.*

9. Ayo Mamudu, 'Portrait of a Young Artist in Ben Okri's *The Landscapes Within*', *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, v13(2), (Spring 1991), 85-91.

10. Ben Okri, *Birds of Heaven* (London: Phoenix House, 1996).

11. In Jacqueline Bardolph's 'Azaro, Saleem and Askar: Brothers in Allegory', *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, Vol. 15(1), Autumn 1992, pp. 45-51, p. 49

12. Quayson, *Strategic Transformations in Nigerian Writing*, p. 131.

13. Femi Folorunso and Ilyse Kusnetz, 'Ben Okri', *Cover Stories* (Radio Scotland, 1 May 1995)

14. Ben Okri, 'Amongst the Silent Stones', in *A Way of Being Free*, pp. 96-103.

15. Elleke Boehmer, 'Representations of Nationalism and Women in African Literature', in *From Commonwealth to Post-Colonial*, ed by Anna Rutherford (Sydney: Dangaroo Press, 1992), pp. 229-47.

16. ibid., in particular p. 235.

17. Patrick Williams, 'West African Writing', in *Writing and Africa*, ed. by Mpalive-Hangson Msiska and Paul Hyland (London and New York: Longman, 1997) pp. 31-45.

18. Lyn Innes and Caroline Rooney, 'African Writing and Gender', in *Writing and Africa*, ed. by Mpalive-Hangson Msiska and Paul Hyland (London and New York: Longman, 1997), pp. 193-215.

19. Abiola Irele, *The African Experience in Literature and Ideology* (London: Heinemann, 1981).

20. Peter Hawkins, 'Un "neoprimitivisme" africain? L'exemple de Werewere Liking', *Revue des Sciences Humaines*, v227(3), (Autumn 1992), 233-41.

21. Chidi Amuta, 'Fanon, Cabral and Ngugi on National Liberation' in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed. by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 158-63.

22. Bruce King, *The New English Literatures: Cultural Nationalism in a Changing World* (London: Macmillan, 1980).

23. King describes how 'the major writers have envisaged encompassing myths to overcome the fragmentation of culture brought about by modernisation and social change. Such myths,' he maintains, may be of 'a lost organic African culture or of eternal universal processes,' and 'are personal and national responses to the effects of industrialisation, urbanisation and middle-class styles of life' (King, 1980: 52).

24. Bonnie J. Barthold, *Black Time: Fiction of Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981).

25. Ben Okri, 'While the World Sleeps' in *A Way of Being Free*, pp. 1-15.

26. Cyprian Fisiy and Peter Geschiere, 'Witchcraft, Violence and Identity: Different Trajectories in Postcolonial Cameroon', in *Postcolonial Identities in Africa*, ed. by Terence O. Ranger and Richard Werbner (London: Zed, 1996), pp. 193-221.

27. In 'Ben Okri's Spirit-Child: Abiku Migration and Postmodernity', Hawley notes that many post-colonial authors use very youthful narrators.

28. Neil Lazarus, *Resistance in Postcolonial African Fiction* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990).

29. Hawley, 'Ben Okri's Spirit-Child: Abiku Migration and Postmodernity'.

30. Ben Okri, 'Political Abiku', in *An African Elegy* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992), pp. 71-75.

31. Quayson, *Strategic Transformations in Nigerian Writing*, pp. 143-46.

32. Ben Okri, 'Fables Are Made of This' in *A Way of Being*, pp. 104-08.

33. Adeline Masquelier, 'Identity, Alterity and Ambiguity in a Nigerian Community: Competing Definitions of "True" Islam', in *Postcolonial Identities in Africa,* ed. by Terence O. Ranger and Richard Werbner (London and New Jersey: Zed, 1996), pp. 222-44. See in particular pp. 233-37.

34. Barthold notes, 'vision and rebellion require heroic strength [...][which is sometimes] [...]blunted by fragmentation' (Barthold, 1981: 70).

35. As recently as 16 June 1996, *The Observer* ran an article about the resurgence of 'village black magic' in South Africa, with 'bodies mutilated in suspected ritual murders [...].in which people are killed and their body parts used to make *muti* (magic medicine).' See David Beresford, 'Witchcraft Holds New Nation Under Old Spell', *The Observer*, 16 June 1996, p. 26. Fisiy and Geschiere maintain that 'in most African countries, the discourse on witchcraft and sorcery is omnipresent' (eds. Ranger and Werbner, 1996: 193).

36. Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

37. Quayson makes a similar point in *Strategic Transformations in Nigerian Writing*, p 129.

38. Edward Blishen, 'Interview With Ben Okri', *Guardian Conversations* (London, England and Northbrook, Illinois: Institute of Contemporary Arts; Roland Collection, 1989).

39. Abrams, M.H. ed., William Wordsworth, Preface to *Lyrical Ballads, With Pastoral and Other Poems* (1802), in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 6th ed., 2 Vols., Vol. 2 (New York and London: Norton, 1993), pp. 141-52. In *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth describes the poet as 'a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endued with more lively sensibility [...]and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind' (as quoted in ed. Abrams, 1993: 147).

40. See, for example, Cribb, 'Transformations in the Fiction of Ben Okri', or Hawley, 'Ben Okri's Spirit-Child: Abiku Migration and Postmodernity', or Nnolim, *Approaches to the African Novel.*

41. Quayson, *Strategic Transformations in Nigerian Writing*, pp. 125-127.

42. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977,* ed. by Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980).

43. Previous observations that Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* is a critically influential textual model for *The Landscapes Within* may be found in Abioseh Michael Porter, 'Ben Okri's *The Landscapes Within:* A Metaphor for Personal and National Development', *World Literature Written in English* 282 (Autumn 1988), 203-210, as well as in Mamudu, 'Portrait of a Young Artist in Ben Okri's *The Landscapes Within'.*

44. Kofi Owusu, 'West Africa', in *The Commonwealth Novel Since 1960,* ed. by Bruce King (London: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 147-65.

45. King, *The New English Literatures*, p. 7.

46. According to Barthold, cyclic time is equivalent to mythic time; African cyclic time represents a harmonious balance between order and chaos, and indicates a healthy community life, as well as a rejection of (white man's) history. See Barthold, in particular, p. 10 and pp. 77-78.

47. Soyinka uses the Ogun myth explicitly in *A Dance of the Forests*, assigning the role of Ogun to an artist, Demoke. He also uses the Ogun myth as the central framework for his play, *The Road* (1965). See King, *The New English Literatures*, pp. 83-93.

48. See Bardolph, 'Azaro, Saleem and Askar: Brothers in Allegory' for a discussion of *The Famished Road* as a political allegory.

49. In 'Intertextuality and Post-Colonial Literature in Ben Okri's *The Famished Road*', Ogunsanwo compares Okri's style to Gabriel Garcia Marquez's because his narratives fluctuate between myth and realism.

50. See, for example, Charles E. Nnolim, *'The Time Is Out Of Joint: Ben Okri As a Social Critic'*, *Commonwealth Novel in English*, v6(1-2), (Spring-Fall 1993), 61-68. Nnolim describes Okri as 'a novelist of sensibility' (Nnolim, 1993: 61) and associates him mainly with European writers of the avant-garde.

51. As well as Frye's position on the matter as discussed in the introduction, Barthold finds herself agreeing that 'the romance' is 'mythic in its concept of time [...] To some extent, the same is true of black fiction' (Barthold, 1981: 78).

52. Blishen, *Guardian Conversations*.

53. David Richards, '"A History of Interruptions": Dislocated Mimesis in the Writings of Neil Bissoondath and Ben Okri', in *From Commonwealth to Post-Colonial*, ed. by Anna Rutherford, pp. 74-82.

Conclusion

Having voiced, in the course of the preceding discussion, some feminist concerns about Rushdie and Okri's work, it might be fitting to briefly comment about some post-colonial aspects of Carter's work. What I would like to close with primarily, however, is a discussion of how feminist and post-colonial theory might find further intersections within 'the romantic'. In the course of this thesis, I have argued that these writers commit to principles of 'the romantic', most specifically to love and imagination. These principles have been illustrated most notably by love-relations between characters (or characters' insights about love), an emphasis upon the act of story-telling or narrative, and a reoccurrence of 'intermediate beings' that occur at the boundaries between 'reality' and imagination, whether they be Carter's hybrid archaeopteryx or Rushdie and Okri's hybrid migrants. It is perhaps useful here in the conclusion to point out further connections between love, hybridity and migration, as illustrated in the work of several critical theorists. In doing so, as I say, I hope to highlight more potential common ground between feminist and post-colonial theory within the paradigm of 'the romantic'.

Post-colonial Elements in Carter's Work

As Jill Matus notes in 'Blonde, Black and Hottentot Venus: Context and Critique in Angela Carter's 'Black Venus'', the story 'Black Venus' 'teases out the racist and colonialist assumptions that inform traditional versions of Jeanne Duval' (Matus, 1991: 467).[1] The story (from a collection of short stories by the same name, published in 1985) stresses the decolonisation of the black creole character Jeanne Duval, and the hypocrisy of romantic love is revealed in the story as the source of Duval's misery. The short story 'Flesh and the Mirror', quoted earlier, is perhaps the most directly

concerned with how Romantic ideas construct an orientalised Other; the narrator recounts how her Westernised ideas about Romantic love have deluded her into misrepresenting her Japanese lover. Like 'Black Venus', 'Flesh and the Mirror' expresses a great suspicion of Romantic love, underlining the negating, Eurocentric consequences of the European subject who uses the Other in the name of romantic love, for purposes of self-affirmation and self-construction.

Perhaps the most intriguing illustration of the post-colonial within Carter's work is found in *HV*. There is a strong connection within the novel to what I defined in Chapter One as the romantic, including references to the Fall, references to Romantic texts and ideas, the idea of the sacred bride, and an emphasis on love as potentially redemptive. It tells the story of a post-apocalyptic struggle between the Professors and the Barbarians, a false binary opposition which can be read as similar to the false binary of 'enlightened' European versus colonised 'savage'. The main character, Marianne (a professor's daughter), comes to terms with Jewel the Barbarian, accepting that in many ways he is as knowledgeable as a Professor, and in other ways, perhaps more so. At the novel's close, she begins to realise the limitations of a Rationalism that codes the thinking subject as ordered and rational and the objectified Other as irrational and chaotic, and with this realisation, enters into a redemptive, though tenuous, process of personal growth.

On Lost Mothers

We have discussed the idea of lost mothers in post-colonial literature, with relation to how they exemplify the Romantic paradigm of the lost mother. In feminist literature and criticism, as we noted in Chapter Two with regard, in particular, to Linda Ruth Williams' evaluation of Carter's work, the search for a feminine identity is often connected to a reworking of the relationship between

mother and daughter; in consideration of that, it might be fruitful to say a few words about how the lost mother appears (so to speak) in relation to the daughter-figures in Angela Carter's work. In *The Magic Toy Shop*, Melanie's mother is killed, as is her father, in a car accident. It is significant that Melanie is wearing her mother's wedding dress at the time, and that the dress becomes ruined when she tries to climb the apple tree up to her bedroom window. We might read this scenario as one concerned with the identity-formation of a young girl who will be faced in the future with choosing or rejecting the role of wife and presumably mother. The fact that the tree is an apple tree evokes the spectre of original sin; the narrative of the Fall, as we suggested in the introduction, is a fundamental motif of the romantic. The ruination of the wedding dress is an ironically hopeful gesture, hinting that Melanie might escape the 'phantom bridegroom' (2) she yearns for early in the novel, and break the cycle of oppressive gender role-playing.

In *WC*, the mother is absent, but the grandmother is a boisterous, loving presence. The skipped generation is reflective of Carter's own experience of being raised largely by her grandmother.[2] Carter herself has admitted that she was a little bothered by the fact that mothers seemed a bit absent in her work, until she realised that houses often seemed to represent the maternal element in her novels.[3] In *WC*, as we noted in Chapter Two, the absence of parents seems to challenge notions of legitimacy in general, and mothering, rather than motherhood, is expressed as a warm and natural process. The situation is similar in *NC*, where Lizzie may or may not be Fevvers' biological mother, but she has certainly taken on the role of nurturer and protector. The indeterminacy of Lizzie's motherhood contributes to Fevver's enigmatic history, and lends strength and credibility to Fevvers' self-mythologising.

Connections Between Feminist and Post-Colonial Theories: Love, Hybridity and Migration/*Metaphorien*

Another interesting aspect to speculate about is one in which distinct parallels may be drawn between feminist descriptions of love and post-colonial descriptions of hybridity and migration. As we noted in Chapter One, Michel de Certeau describes love as occupying an 'interspace' which involves both excess and movement. The word interspace, and the idea of movement, echoes the notion of the hybrid as an 'intermediate being' who is continually 'migrating' between self and Other, or one culture and another. De Certeau's evocation of the 'middle-ground' of love also gestures towards feminist theories of intersubjectivity which place love, or *Eros*, in just such a 'middle' space.[4] Using the example of *Eros* in *The Symposium*, Irigaray presents love (*Eros*) as a 'third term' that mediates between two subjects in an intersubjective relationship; love exists

> between the one and the other, in a state that can be qualified as daimonic: love is a *daimon* [...] A being of middle nature [...] so that men and gods can enter into relations, into conversation, while awake or asleep. (Irigaray 1993: 22-3)

Irigaray's description of *Eros* characterises it, in effect, as being hybrid: 'between' and 'of middle nature', and subject to a spiritual migration (between a mortal and the divine Other). It is no coincidence that the two are described in similar terms. Hybridity, as we have seen in Carter, Rushdie and Okri's work, may describe the self's relation to its own otherness and/or a mixing between one culture and an(other's) culture; in the intersubjective relation, love's hybrid nature enables it to take on the task of mediation between the subject-self and the beloved Other.

In Irigaray's model, the Beloved is endowed with the otherness of divinity, in order to free it from representation,[5] but love itself is seen metaphorically as a '*daimon*'. The *daimon* of love is a 'being of middle nature', a hybrid, and here the connection between demons and hybrids is apparent.

Though Irigaray surprisingly does not mention it, the demonic aspect of love can be seen to correspond to both excessiveness and transgression; the notion of a demon signifies that which exceeds and transgresses established order and established boundaries. We have seen that Rushdie's use of the demonic or satanic signifies a transgression of sacred discourse or Truth, with the resulting 'excess' taking its form as fiction. As fiction threatens the 'purity' of a sacred truth, so the hybrid demon of love disturbs the notion of a pure or sovereign self. In Chapter Two we discussed the idea of love as sublime; Irigaray's metaphor of *Eros* as a *daimon* might serve as an illustration of this idea, as the sublime also exceeds and redefines the individual subject in relation to an(other).

As we have noted, as well as being described as a hybrid, love has also been described as a kind of migration. Kristeva discusses love in terms of the older Greek meaning of metaphor, *metaphorien*, emphasising the notion of 'transport' associated with transference, and the sensation of being emotionally impelled towards an(other).[6] In Chapter Three we discussed Rushdie's use of the older Greek sense of metaphor to describe migration, the act of being borne across a boundary. The two senses of *metaphorien* are not incompatible; while the latter relates more to cultural boundaries, it can also apply to an individual context of negotiation between self and an(other). It is precisely this negotiation between self and an(other) that connects hybridity and *metaphorien*, or metaphor as migration. The hybrid self is partly defined by virtue of its migratory state, its continual crossing of boundaries, which impels it to continually negotiate an otherness within. In the case of *metaphorien* as transport, however, such 'border-crossing' takes place between the self and an(other).

In an intersection between feminist and post-colonial theory, the two ideas of *metaphorien* might usefully be combined in a theory of intersubjectivity. In combining the two aspects of transport and migration, we can theorise the middle term of intersubjectivity as *Eros*, a border-crossing hybrid;

to enter into the 'state' of *Eros*, to love, subjects must in effect become hybrids themselves, crossing the border of self and travelling towards an Other or otherness. As Kristeva notes in *Tales of Love*,[7] 'In love' is a state in which '"I" has been an *other*' (Kristeva 1984: 4). Love hybridises the self by placing the self into a contiguous relationship with otherness, in effect submitting the self to a process of estrangement. In a manner of speaking, those subjects who are 'in love' must enter into a 'state' of hybridity; in love there can be no 'pure' self, no sovereign self--only selves that exist as fragments of self and otherness, identity and difference.

Such a theory of intersubjectivity need not only be applicable to individual relationships. We might speculate that the power of imaginative narrative or storytelling, which involves metaphors, also involves the process of *metaphorien*. We might view the power of imagination as similar to the power of love, in that it can transport us, and make us 'travellers in the mind'. Imagination and love become similar insofar as they provoke this passage towards 'other lands' and 'other inhabitants', while optimally providing us with ethical frameworks (i.e. love, literature) within which to encounter otherness.

For Kristeva, there are deep connections between love and artistic metaphor. Kristeva maintains that the language of love is similar to the language of literature, and describes how both can be used to recreate the '*Ego affectus est*,' the 'self as one-in-relation-to-an-Other' (Meaney, 1993: 165). In her opening chapter of *Tales of Love*, 'In Praise of Love', Kristeva perceives that

> The language of love [...] is a flight of metaphors--it is literature [...] What is psychoanalysis if not an infinite quest for rebirths through the experience of love, which is begun again only to be displaced, renewed [...] In the rapture of love, the limits of one's own identity vanish, at the same time that the precision of reference and meaning becomes blurred in love's discourse [...] We invent it each time, with every necessarily unique loved one. (Kristeva, 1984: 1,2,4,6 respectively)

The language of love is metaphor, here used also as a term to connote transport, i.e. 'flight', and its function is to remake ideas and images of the self and the Other. The language of love is here equated with artistic metaphor, specifically literature; love is 'a synthesis of ideal and affect' and 'metaphor [...] is seen by Kristeva' as 'the point at which ideal and affect come together in language. Love is therefore present in poetry and art in general through the agency of metaphor' (Lechte, 1990: 30).[8] For Kristeva, because of their combination of ideal and affect, both love and art function to destabilise the individual subject by placing him or her into a relation with an(other), whether (as we suggested above) that other be another person, or a text, or another culture; love and love's discourse (literature) are thus both capable of revitalising the *Ego affectus est.*

It is significant that the literature examined within this dissertation points so markedly to the importance of romantic love since, as we have discussed above, love leads the subject beyond itself, towards an(other). Kristeva may see literary metaphor as the place where ideal and affect meet, but additionally, the focus on love within their literature allows Carter, Rushdie and Okri to gesture towards that which is *beyond* the discourse of literature, and in fact beyond all discourse, in other words, towards affect itself. Such a focus leads Yvonne Martinsson to speculate that in *NC*, 'The ethical encounter with the Other merges [...] with the erotics of reading by means of the dimension of being we call love [...] Love has the transformative powers of rewriting the place from where the subject speaks' (Martinsson, 1996: 20).[9] There are certainly reasons to base intersubjectivity on the exchange of affect, rather than simply on the exchange of language, and these have to do with issues of the body, and of problems with language usage within different cultural contexts. While Handwerk goes so far as to explain why he sees Lacanian intersubjectivity as a kind of Romantic Irony,[10] his theory of intersubjectivity is based upon linguistic exchanges between subjects, so it either ignores

or relegates emotional or other bodily/visceral and cultural matters. A theory of intersubjectivity based upon language not only fails to recognise, for example, the haptic dimension of human subjectivity, but equally as important, it fails to take into account both the untranslatable aspect of language from one cultural context to another, and it assumes a basic similarity of subject-positions, which may not be the case. As Fokkema notes in 'Post-modern Fragmentation or Authentic Essence?: Character in *The Satanic Verses*', critic

> Rosi Braidotti [...] emphasizes that in order to take account of 'difference' on the levels of class, colour, gender, culture, and even the individual person, the subject must be seen to possess some identity apart from its constitution in language. (Fokkema, 1993: 53)

Feminist theories of intersubjectivity which use love as a 'middle-term' may also help us to go beyond theories that constitute the subject as primarily or solely a linguistic construct. Such a perspective fails to take into account significant differences in subject-positions that are due to patriarchal and/or imperialist ideologies embedded in linguistic usage, or to fundamental incommensurabilities in translation, whether of language or culture. Certainly, the emphasis on the subject as a linguistic construct seems to overlook what Bataille so aptly describes as the communion between lovers 'even in the most profound silence, where each movement, charged with burning passion, has the power to convey ecstasy' (Bataille, 1985: 229).[11] We might commend, for example, the attempt by Roland Barthes in *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*,[12] to construct a 'language' for lovers (whom he calls 'amatory subjects') based on the lover's emotional response to various liminal events and situations, with his realisation that subjectivity is predicated precisely upon that which is beyond linguistic representation.

To further connect what we have been discussing to post-colonial criticism, though we have

examined how love and literature may be connected through the notions of hybridity and *metaphorien*, we might also relate some of the above discussion to Homi K. Bhabha's ideas about what he terms the 'Third Space'. We have posited love as a third term, a hybrid interlocutor in the intersubjective relation, that acts in that capacity to open the subject (through affect) to otherness. Bhabha's Third Space is 'unrepresentable [...] The precondition for the articulation of cultural difference [and the] *in-between* space--that carries the burden of the meaning of culture' (Bhabha, 1994: 37, 38).[13] Although the Third Space has to do with articulating 'cultural difference', the fact that the Third Space is an 'in-between space' connects it further to the concepts of love and hybridity as we have been discussing them. There are further parallels between love as a third term and Bhabha's idea of a Third Space if we take into account love's unrepresentability; love as emotion, or affect, cannot be represented--only presented to an(other). And while Bhabha theorises that the Third Space enables *cultural* difference to be articulated, love may enable the difference of another person from another culture to be articulated, within the intersubjective relation. If it is true, as Bhabha maintains, that it is indeed 'the trope of our times to locate the question of culture in the realm of the *beyond*' (Bhabha, 1994: 1), then it seems useful to explore the connections between feminist theory where the beyond is accessed through the love-relation, and post-colonial theory where the beyond is located between cultures.

Bhabha tends to be more antagonistic than relational in his outlook, in that he views the Third Space as a 'space of cultural and interpretive undecidability' which exists between 'colonizer and colonized' (Bhabha, 1994: 206). It might be useful to view the model of intersubjectivity we have been discussing (where love creates a kind of 'Third Space') as one that could be applicable to cultural encounters which do not seek to be so extreme in their antagonism. Indeed, Bhabha himself

expresses the hope that 'by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves' (Bhabha, 1994: 39). The sense of rebirth this passage evokes corresponds to the renewal of the othered self that Kristeva celebrates, i.e. those 'rebirths through the experience of love' where '"I" is an other', and where 'the limits of one's own identity vanish, at the same time that the precision of reference and meaning becomes blurred in love's discourse'. Such a blurring of meaning may well correspond to Bhabha's 'interpretive undecidability', and if post-colonial criticism should wish to move beyond specifically antagonistic polarities, keeping in mind that it is often politically useful for post-colonial criticism to preserve such antagonisms, feminist theories of love could perhaps provide it with the means of *transport*.

1. Jill Matus, 'Blonde, Black and Hottentot Venus: Context and Critique in Angela Carter's "Black Venus"', *Studies in Short Fiction*, v28(4), (Fall 1991), pp. 467-76.

2. Lorna Sage discusses this in 'Death of the Author', pp. 237-238.

3. In 'Angela Carter Interviewed by Lorna Sage', Sage comments, 'She has often been asked, [Carter] says, why there are so few mothers in her books, and has realised that all along the houses have stood in for mother [...] "Like a good Freudian, I was thinking of houses as being mothers"' (Sage, 1992: 190).

4. There are other theories of intersubjectivity which are not specifically feminist, such as those based upon Lacanian ideas; see for example Handwerk, *Irony and Ethics in Narrative*.

5. As Irigaray writes, 'If we are to have a sense of the other that is not projective or selfish, we have to attain an intuition of the infinite [...] The intuition of a god or divine principle aiding in the birth of the other without pressuring it with our own desire' (Irigaray 1993: 111-12).

6. In *New Maladies of the Soul*, trans. by Ross Guberman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), Kristeva discusses how, 'Identification with a *relation* [...] is a transference between my body and my ever-evolving psychic apparatus--which is incomplete, flexible, and fluid--and an *other* [...] (note the metaphorical side of this *transport*, which is known as *metaphorien* in Greek)' (Kristeva, 1995: 173). In *In the Beginning Was Love: Psychoanalysis and Faith*, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), a brief meditation on the state of contemporary psychoanalysis, Kristeva emphasises how psychoanalysis casts both analyst and analysand as subjects within an 'amorous discourse' (Kristeva, 1987: 3) which emphasises affect as the key to transference, rather than language, i.e. the analyst stands in for the significant other from whom the analysand requires love.

7. Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

8. John Lechte, ' Art, Love, and Melancholy in the Work of Julia Kristeva', in *Abjection, Melancholia and Love: The Work of Julia Kristeva*, ed. by Andrew Benjamin and John Fletcher (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 24-41.

9. Yvonne Martinsson, *Eroticism, Ethics and Reading: Angela Carter in Dialogue with Roland Barthes* (Stockholm, Sweden: Almquist and Wiksell International, 1996).

10. See Handwerk's *Irony and Ethics in Narrative: From Schlegel to Lacan.*

11. Georges Bataille, 'The Sorcerer's Apprentice', in *Visions of Excess*, pp. 223-34.

12. Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang; The Noonday Press, 1990).

13. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).

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